

**EXPLORING EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR CREATING
HUMAN RESOURE POLICIES AND PRACTICES AWARENESS - A CASE
STUDY OF THE GHANA WATER COMPANY LIMITED-ASHANTI REGIONAL
BRANCH**

BY:
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B A (COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES)

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**A Thesis submitted to the Department of Managerial Science, Kwame Nkrumah
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the degree of**

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School of Business College of Arts and Social Sciences

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University except where due acknowledgement has been made.

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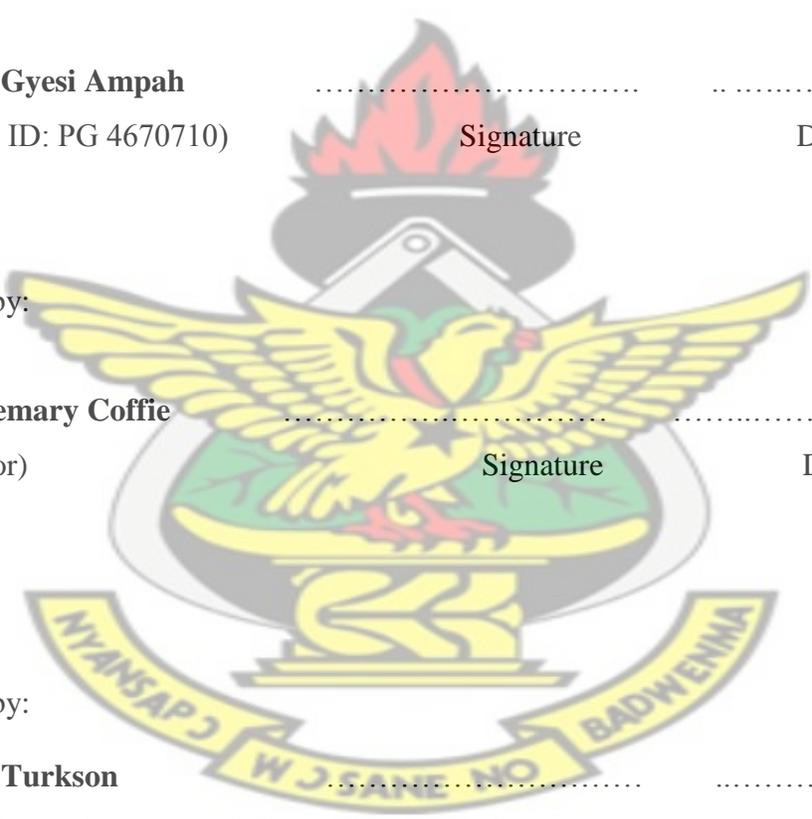
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ABSTRACT

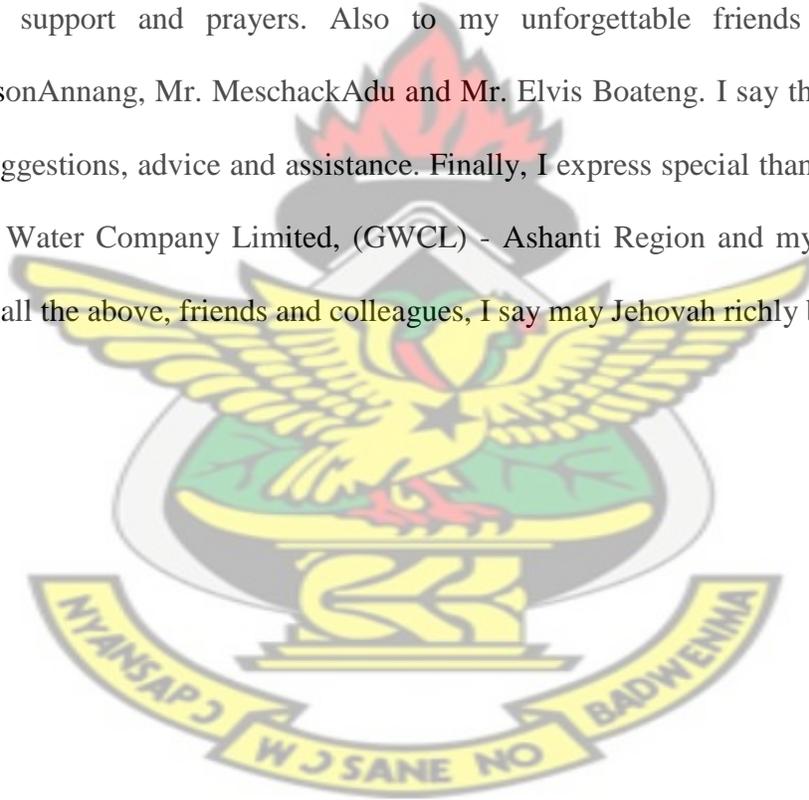
This research was driven by the problem statement that although HR policies exist in many organizations, the content of these policies have not been communicated well enough to many employees. The general objective of the study is to find out how awareness of HR policies and practices could be created through employee communication. To achieve the objective of the study, the methodology of the research employed the use of a case study research design and used questionnaires and a semi-structured interview to solicit both qualitative and quantitative data from the targeted respondents namely the employer and employees of the Ashanti Regional Branch of the Ghana Water Company Limited. The research generated many findings included the following main ones. First, about half of the respondents were aware of the existence of the policy document. Second, majority of the employees, don't have access to the policy document. Third, a remarkable number indicated they were not satisfied with the current level of the communication of the HR policies. Also, the research suggests future study into the communication gap analysis between senior and junior staff. Finally, the study offered some specific recommendations including such main ones as follows; that a comprehensive employee handbook with all the mandatory and recommended HR policies and procedures should be made available to the employee, a collaborative effort between the management and the union to make copies of the policy available to all employees, the need to educate frontline managers, regular training should be organized to improve management-employee communication to enhance effective Human Resource practices.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Dear wife, Naa Dzamah Odoi and my children Nii Prince Charles and Naa Princess Kisha.

KNUST



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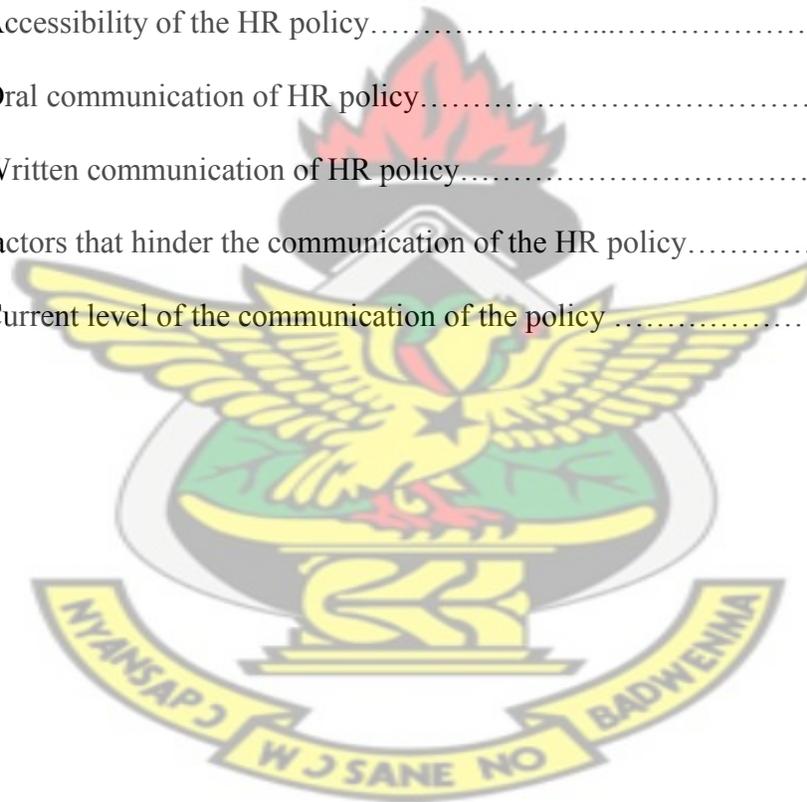
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Communication is very important in every human establishment. It is a natural phenomenon and an integral part of our daily lives both as individuals and as organizations, whether spoken, written or both. It is as important to an organization as water is important to life. Communication involving all levels of the administrative hierarchy is a basic prerequisite for every organization. Effective and efficient communication within the organization is critical to the pursuit of organizational objectives.

Employee communication on the other hand, is communication directed to and among internal publics of organizations: management, supervisors, managers, administrators, clerks, messengers etc. Goldhaber (1979), states that, employee communication occurs between different levels (a hierarchical model) or sections (a non-hierarchical model) of an organization- from management to management; management to employee; employee to management and from employee to employee.

A free flow of information between the management and employees, among the employee will help to boost a peaceful and conducive business atmosphere. However, any organization that withholds vital information from its workforce may be promoting rancor which is detrimental to the realization of the overall objectives and goals of the organization.

The Human Resource department mainly acts as a bridge between the organization, staff and the organization (top management). Apart from proper organization of each and every personnel's duties and profiles, personnel requirement, welfare policies, monitor and improve efficiency of the staff, solving staff problems, payroll management, pre-recruitment and post-resignation formalities, ensure training of new personnel; Taking care of Legal Requirements like Labour Law, Factories Act etc. all falls under the duties of the Human Resource department.

According to Mullins, (2007), efficiency and performance of staff, and their commitment to the objectives of the organization, are fostered by good human relationships at work and effective Human Resource Management policies and practices. Human Resource Management policies should therefore emanate from the top of the organization. They should be subject to consultation with employee and union representatives, clearly defined and communicated through managers and supervisors to staff at all levels.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Human Resources Management Policies exist to supply members of the organization with information. Information related with security of employment and management intentions. Therefore without policies employees will assume adherence to management precedent. One of the means to disseminate such information is through employee communication which is a central role of the personnel functions - part of Human Resource Issues /decisions concerning employees (wage demands and working conditions, HR policies) should be well explained and communicated to employee in plain language.

Managers must thus be able to involve people when organizational plans are being drawn and when agreeing on team and individual objectives in a clear and comprehensive manner. When this is done employees feel part of the organization this therefore helps them to give off their best. This also motivates employees to put in that extra “discretionary effort” because; they are informed openly and honestly on aspects of their job, and feel that they are being listened to with empathy. However, in organizations where this is not the case, this results in conflict, industrial unrest as well as low employee morale and this subsequently affects productivity.

At the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL), communication is mainly from top-down. The few that go upwards are in the form of reports and other forms of responses to management’s demands.

Managers and their frontline managers on another hand do not communicate certain vital information that employees need to know. Some of the problems which are as a result of the poor employee communication –HR function are that, employees’ do not know their dos and don’ts, code of ethics as well as their rights. For instance every employee is supposed to know the organization’s Conditions of service and working conditions as contained in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) which is one of the many HR policies but that is not the case. Some employees have not even seen a copy of the CBA before. A few that have apart from sectional heads/management members and the union, don’t not even know what it fully contained.

In fact, there was even an instance where a sectional head (senior staff who is supposed to know and apply provisions of the CBA), rather infringed on the right of a subordinate who was later rescued by the union, just because of the subordinate’s ignorance of the

provisions in the CBA. This situation sometimes brings poor employee morale, poor work output, dispute and misunderstanding which affects the individual and the organization as well as productivity. However, this problem can be avoided if managers and their line managers take the lead in practicing effective employee communication.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General Objective

The research sought to find out how awareness on HR policies and practices could be created through employee communication.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The research directly examined how employee communication helps in creating awareness on HR policies and practices, with the following specific objectives; to

- i) Investigate whether employees of GWCL really know the HR policies and practices of their organisation.
- ii) Investigate whether the HR policies and practices of GWCL are being communicated effectively to the employees.
- iii) Examine the factors that hinder communication of HR policies and practices at GWCL.
- iv) Find out how best HR policies can be communicated to employees of GWCL.

1.3 Research Questions

From the above stated objectives, the following research questions with reference to GWCL were appropriate to form the focus of the study:

- I. Are the staff of GWCL aware of their HR policies and practices?
- II. How are HR policies and practices currently being communicated in GWCL?
- III. What factors hinder communication of HR policies and practices at GWCL?
- IV. What are the best ways of communicating HR policies and practices at GWCL?

1.4 Relevance of the Study

The study when completed would be of importance to generally improve knowledge base in Human Resource practice in the management and administration of Ghanaian companies and institutions. Again, the findings will no doubt help augment the knowledge and also highlight the need for all employees of GWCL to be aware of the organizations HR policies especially their rights and responsibilities. Such awareness will apparently help reduce industrial problems that appear often and eventually will increase productivity.

1.5 Overview of Methodology

The research used primary and secondary data. The method of data collection included personal interviews and the administration of questionnaires. These data collection methods supplied to the researcher both descriptive and statistical data. The analysis of data involved descriptive and statistical analysis to determine the relationship between employee communication and effective HR practices.

1.6 Scope

In geographical sense, the study will cover workers in all departments of the selected organization. Again, since it will attempt to solicit views from several departments and individuals the responses are likely to express a more balanced view of the situation under investigation. The researcher would have wished to cover much wider participants but owing to constraints in material, financial and time proposed to finish the study; the study was narrowed in its scope of coverage and was therefore limited to the Ashanti regional branch of the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL).

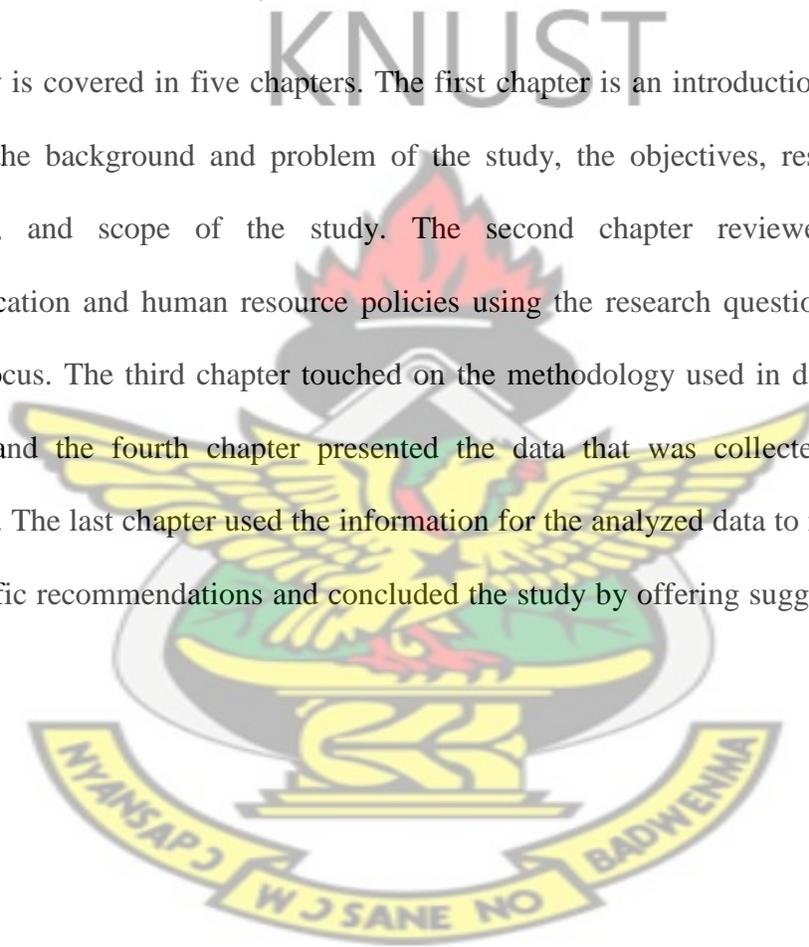
1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study was carried out under the following limitations including the following ones the researcher noticed. The research was bound by a strict time schedule of which failure to complete would mean non-completion of the program which the research is a major part. Thus the study was limited to a regional branch of the company. Also the researcher faced difficulties in the sending and collection of questionnaires, hence the inability to cover many branches. Again some respondents failed to answer and return the questionnaires while others could not even locate their copies, which can affect the overall validity and

application of the study conducted. In addition there were a lot of interferences in course of the interviews due to the frequency with which other parties visited the offices, the interview settings. This led to loss of some vital explanations since it often derailed the interviewees from points being developed.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is covered in five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study. It outlined the background and problem of the study, the objectives, research questions, relevance, and scope of the study. The second chapter reviewed literature on communication and human resource policies using the research questions to give it the desired focus. The third chapter touched on the methodology used in data collection for analysis and the fourth chapter presented the data that was collected, analyzed and discussed. The last chapter used the information for the analyzed data to make appropriate and specific recommendations and concluded the study by offering suggestions for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on employee communication and Human Resource Policies by authors and researchers. It provides a conceptual framework to the study and attempt to validate the need for the research. The review was conducted through the internet, textbooks, journals and unpublished literary materials.

2.1 Employee Communication

Employee communication is defined here as ‘the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialization that are intended to design and redesign organizations, to implement designs and to coordinate day-to-day activities’ (Frank and Brownell 1989). Employee communication is generally seen as a multidimensional construct. Employees are not merely satisfied or dissatisfied with communication in general, but can express varying degrees of satisfaction about definite aspects of communication).

2.1.1 The content of employee communication.

Whereas social categorization would require that employees receive adequate information about what is central and distinctive about their organization, self-categorization (Turner 1987) can be facilitated when employees are provided with useful information about their role in the organization. We therefore distinguish between communication about how the

organization deals with relevant organizational issues and communication about one's personal contribution to the company's success.

Being well-informed about organizational issues (such as goals and objectives, new developments, activities and achievements) will enable members to discover the salient characteristics that distinguish this organization from others (Dutton *et al.* 1994), and thus enhance social categorization. By this, the in-group will become more transparent as an object with which to identify. Furthermore, mere exposure to information about the own organization will increase the perceived attractiveness of the organization and thus may reassure members that they work for an organization that is worth being associated with. In organizations that are perceived favorably by their members, organizational identification is more likely to occur (Dutton *et al.* 1994), because it enhances members' feelings of self-worth.

2.1.2 Communication climate

The communication climate can be seen as a facet of the broader construct of 'organizational climate'. Communication climate is distinguished from organizational climate in that it includes only communicative elements, for example, judgments on the receptivity of management to employee communication or the trustworthiness of information being disseminated in the organization (Guzley 1992). The communication climate is an important aspect in all communication audits. Relevant dimensions are (Trombetta) openness and trust (candor) in communication, the perceived participation in decision making (or the feeling of having a voice in the organization), and supportiveness (or the feeling of being taken seriously).

We expect that a more positive communication climate will increase members' identification with the organization. Some indications for this effect can be derived from studies by Trombetta and Rogers (1988) and Guzley (1992), who found that a satisfying communication climate positively affects members' involvement with and loyalty to the organization. Other studies showed that both openness of (top) management and involvement in organizational decision making increase trust in management (Mishra and Morrissey 1990; McCauley and Kuhnert 1992) may even increase profit and productivity.

A positive communication climate will strengthen identification, because it is rewarding and thus serves members' self-enhancement. It invites employees to participate actively in discussions about organizational issues and involves them in decision making. Moreover, openness in the communication with supervisors and colleagues may add to one's feelings of self-worth, because under such conditions members will experience that they are being taken seriously.

Each Human Resource (HR) function required a degree of effective communication if it is to be successful. It therefore calls for developing an appreciation for the importance of communication in HR practices. Byars and Rue (1987) referred to ground-breaking work on "The Marketing Approach to Communicating with Employees" by Joseph A. Banik (Personnel Journal, 1985), that intimated that, initiating a new personnel programme creates an information need in employees at all levels of the organization and as the programme grows and it is kept current, management must continually fulfil this information need. The problem is that, managers usually fail to think consciously about this and that well designed HR programmes are not properly "marketed" to employees. The marketing concept of employee communication expects managers to think in marketing

terms: where the products are the HR programmes; the customers are the employees; price is often employee commitment, motivation and cooperation; and the sellers being management. Because of poor employee communication, HR managers spend tremendous amount of time developing very good programmes only to subsequently do a poor job of communicating the programme. The end result is that a “great” program that goes largely unused (Byars and Rue 1987). For any strategy to succeed, it is vital that everyone who needs to know about it is informed. When management transmits information to employees, and the employees understand and send a feedback to management, it can be said that employee communication has taken place.

Managers should appreciate the fact that management’s expectations will not necessarily coincide with those of employees. Therefore, in delivering messages, managers should use and not neglect different and complementary channels of communication such as newsletters, briefing groups, videos, notice boards etc. It is obvious that commitment is gained of people who understand what they are expected to commit to. But management too often fail to pay sufficient attention to delivering the message in terms which recognize that the frame of reference of those who receive, it to be quite different from their own. According to Armstrong (1994), part of the employee communication process is to share the values of management with employees and encourage them to uphold those values. It should be noted that this is a sharing process and that values cannot be forced down people’s throats. People will only accept them if they are congruent with their own values. And as Wilson and Hanna (1990) put it, employee communication is not as simple as water flowing through a pipe-assuming that there are no blockages in the pipe and once the water is put into one end of the pipe and sent on its way, it will get to the other end

essentially intact. In view of this, management needs to be sensitive and empathetic to foster trust and open two-way communication with employees, through both formal and informal communication channels. This builds trust and loyalty to achieve team or organizational goals and according to Evans (1990), the success of this process depends heavily upon the sender receiving feedback.

2.2. Media of Communication

Every manager or employee within an organisation makes constant value-judgements about what to communicate and how to do it. What medium to choose and what tool or equipment to employ. This is very important because of the constantly changing employee demographics in terms of age (generation), gender, culture, level of education, among others. This part of the review looks at the various media of communication available to an organization. They are broadly grouped into verbal (oral and written) and non-verbal.

2.2.1. Verbal Communication

This refers to the transmitting and receiving of ideas by using words. Verbal communication can either be oral, using spoken language in the forms such as face-to-face talks, telephone conversations, tape recording and the like or written, in the form of memos, letters electronic mails and annual reports.

Oral Communication is ideal when it is necessary to pass on short messages or find information quickly. It is suitable for communicating complex information. Duplis and Wilson (1982) referred to it as the most effective form of communication. Various forms

available to a manager are face-to-face contact, interviews, meetings (conferences, presentations, seminars and briefings) and telephone calls.

Written communication is used for situation where speed is not particularly important, necessary to contact several people at the same time, and people cannot be contacted in person or by phone among others. Longer, detailed messages are sent, and recorded for future use. Examples are letters, memoranda (or memo), reports, manuals/employee handbook, newsletter, notice/bulletin-boards, electronic mails (or e-mails), pagers, text messaging, facsimile (fax) transmission and teletext.

In all the examples mentioned above, the forms that have to do with electronic communication have become the norm and increasingly important. Memos and letters are static media. Also Duplis and Wilson (1982) intimated that written communication does not provide opportunity for immediate feedback and on the spot correction as in face-to-face contact. It is time consuming and depends on drafting ability to convey an exactness which is often easily established by verbal stress in speech. Clarity in written work is essential as misunderstanding cannot be immediately detected or corrected and termed an incomplete method of communication because it lacks the human touch (Lyons 1985).

2.2.2 Non-Verbal Communication

This is the transmission of messages without the use of words. Pearson *et al.* (2003), defined non-verbal communication as “the attributes or actions of humans, other than the use of words themselves, which have socially shared meaning, are intentionally sent or interpreted as intentional, are consciously sent or consciously received, and have the

potential for feedback from the receiver.” Because communication is complex, the relative contribution of non-verbal communication to verbal communication, often provides much more meaning than it is realized. This includes meta-communication and kinesics message.

2.2.3 Routes of Communication

In general, organizational communication systems are vertical (i.e. downward and upward), lateral (or horizontal) and diagonal. These are explained below:

2.2.3.1 Downward communication

Downward is a term used to describe the principal channel for routing directives, instructions and policies from decision makers down through the organization to the people who, at various levels will implement these. The chain of command determines the flow of information. As messages move downward through successive levels of the organization, they seem to get larger. At times as message passes through various levels, it often becomes less accurate (especially if it is oral).

2.2.3.2 Upward communication

The upward route starts at the lower level to the top of the organization. Generally, it is feedback to downward communication. So, messages following in this direction tend to contain the information managers need to do their jobs such as data required for decision making and the status of various projects. When managers requests information from lower levels of organizational, the resulting information helps management to judge the effectiveness of its downward communication and to help learn about organizational problems.

Although necessary and valuable, upward communication does contain risks (Lehman and DuFrene 2005). Employees reporting upwards are aware that their communications carry the risk of putting them on the spot or committing them to something they cannot handle. So, it often tends to suffer from serious inaccuracies such as, subordinates frequently highlighting their accomplishment and downplay their mistakes if they are to be looked on favourably. Also, some individuals fear that they will be rebuked by their supervisors if they consider that their remarks as threatening. As a result many people frequently avoid communication bad views to their superiors. Lehman and DuFrene (2005) expressed that, although employees typically appreciate and welcome genuine opportunities to send information to management, they will likely resent any superficial attempt to provide an open communication network with management.

There are seven different options open to managers who want to improve upward communication;

Formal Grievance Procedures (also called 'Negotiating Bodies' by Kempner 1987) occurs when employees are represented by their unions, provisions for upward communication are usually spelt out in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Typically, unionized employees utilize a formal grievance procedure for contesting managerial actions and oversight. Formal grievance procedures are also found in non-union situations but an alternative to the traditional grievance process is the Peer Review Program.

Employee Attitude and Opinion Surveys, both in-house and commercially prepared surveys can bring employee attitudes and feeling to the surface. Employees will usually complete surveys if they are convinced that meaningful changes will result. Surveys with

no feedback or follow-up action tend to alienate employees, who feel they are just wasting their time.

Suggestion Systems involves specific procedures for submitting ideas and utilize committee to review and evaluate suggestions. According to Whitehall (1999), the Japanese give this a much more serious approach including training and orientation. Fairness and prompt feedback are keys to success. Monetary incentive can help too. A study of the Peugeot Company found a correlation between suggestion and productivity (Costely and Todd 1987).

Open-door policy have been both praised and criticized. Proponent say problems can be nipped in the bud when managers keep their doors open and employees feel free to walk in at any time to talk with them. But critics contend that an open-door policy encourages employees to leap frog the formal chain of command and an invitation to annoying interruptions when managers can least affords them. A limited open-door policy, such as afternoons only, can effectively remedy the last objection. Also a programme called “Write to the top”, in which everyone is encouraged to write to the Chief Executive Officer about anything that is on their minds and read by only him is suggested (Kreitner 1995). This can be effectively done via a company’s intranet. Another solution is a Question and Answer column in employee publication and a hot-telephone line system also encourages the open-door communication.

Informal Gripe Sessions encourages employees to freely air their feelings. They are confident that management will not criticize or penalize them for being frank. The term gripe session seem to encourage only negative communication, and so a more positive

label is recommended such as an informal “coffee talks or breaks”. To stimulate upward communication employee get-togethers with senior management can be used.

Task Force (Kempner 1987 referred to this as Joint Consultative Body) is a team of management and non-management personnel assigned to a specific problem or issue. Generally, they are fact finding and advisory panels with no final decision-making authority.

Exit interviews offer a frank and honest feedback. An employee leaving an organization no longer fears possible recrimination from superiors and so can be very frank. On the other hand, exit interviews have been criticized for eliciting artificially negative feedback, due to ill-feelings for the management.

The lateral route describes the interactions between organizations units on the same hierarchical level. That is messages flow literally at the same organizational level, characterized by efforts at co-ordination. Here, specialized departments such as Human Resource, Marketing, Research and Developments, Quality Control, Finance among others perform functions that call for horizontal communication or interaction because their activities influence several chains of command rather than just one. This fosters the needed interdependence to achieve organizational goals. According Lehman and DuFrene (2005), these interactions reveal one of the major shortcomings of organizational charts. This is because charts do not allow much room for horizontal communication when they depict authority relationships by placing one box higher than another and define role functions by placing titles in those boxes. Yet horizontal communication is the primary means of achieving co-ordination in a functional organizational structure. Lawrence and Elliott (1985), shared a similar view that, ‘about one third of all communication within

organizations is horizontal, including communication within and between work groups between departments and between line and staff positions’.

Generally marked by the increased frankness and ease with which groups at similar levels communicate. The reason is that they are less affected or inhibited by the chain-of-command which employee’s tend to experience when communicating with superiors. This communication tends to be friendlier, more causal and occurs more quickly because fewer social barriers exist between the parties.

2.2.3.3 Diagonal communication

The Diagonal route of communication in an organization is the one that cut across departments where the communication is between a superior and a subordinate, in either direction but not according to the actual chain of command as prescribed by the organizational chart. Frequently tasks arise in organizations which call for this. For example, a middle-manager may require a service or a job to be performed and he might have to deal with a colleague more senior to him, in another department and if the colleague is junior to him, he still will not report to him, and may therefore be under fewer obligations. Diagonal communication therefore relies heavily on reservoirs of co-operation and good-will which the proficient communicator has carefully nurtured by way of the friendly greetings or brief chats with colleagues on his journeys through the company’s offices (Evans 1990).

2.2.3.3.1 Major Factors Influencing Communication Routes in organizations

In an organization, communication routes are influenced by many factors including organization structure, groups (i.e. formal networks of communication) and individuals (i.e. informal network between people). In addition, Evans (1990) mentioned formal, informal, grapevine and bypassing routes. These are explained below:

The Organizational Structure formally presents a pattern of communication between individuals and responsibility blocks. These are relatively fixed and defined with lines of authority showing who must answer to whom. Each person is responsible to the person at the next higher level, to which he is connected. At the same time people are also responsible for those who are immediately below them. The organizational chart forms a sort of blue print of an organization showing not only what people have to do, but with whom they have to communicate, for the organization to operate properly. Establishing such formal communication channels is critical where companies are very large.

The Formal Networks of Communication are the patterns of relationships through which information flows in an organization (Pearson et al, 2003). It is the complex web of affiliations among individuals and organizations as they are woven through collaborative threads of communication. Communication networks may differ with respect to a key feature: their degree of centralization – the degree to which information must flow through a specific member of the network. Mullins (2007) mentioned five main types of communication networks – wheel, circle, all-channels, ‘Y’ and chairs. The type of network or sociogram according to Gorman (1992) depends on, the nature of the organization, style of leadership, and the type of task being undertaken. The wheel, chain

and Y networks are identified as centralized networks – communication going through a central person who is at the crossroads of information flow. In contrast, the circle and all-channel (also called comcon) are decentralized networks – information can freely flow between members without going through a central person. People in the decentralized networks have equal access to information whereas those in centralized networks are unequal because the individuals at the centre have access to more information than those on the periphery. Expressing a similar view Wilson and Hanna (1990) added that sociograms developed in groups as a result of the evolution of social and task structure. The key idea is centrality, the measure of communication linkages between parties in the network.

Informal Networks of Communication is generally considered to be any interaction that does not generally follow the formal structure of the organization but emerges out of natural social interaction among its members (Pearson et al, 2003). These channels of communication develop as people interact within the formal, external system, and certain behavioural patterns emerge – patterns that accommodate social and psychological needs. Because the informal channel undergoes confirmed changes, it cannot be depicted accurately by any graphic means. Whereas formal communication consists of official organizational messages, the informal one does not follow official lines. It follows through on the concept of emergent organizational networks which represents the informal, naturally occurring patterns of communication relationships in organizations.

Even the most formal organizations, however, cannot function long before an informal communication system emerges. As people operate within the external support, they must

interact on a person-to-person basis and create an environment conducive to satisfy their personal emotions, prejudices, likes and dislikes (Lehman and DuFrene 2005). Eventually, the informal system overlaps the formal system, and benefits people because it is efficient; and it affects the overall communication of employees in important ways. Evans (1990) was of a similar view when he expressed that a surprising amount of communicating is done in organization informally even when it is official. That is to say that much information is passed on by word of mouth among interested colleagues who have received it from various sources – briefings, memoranda, visits, reports and so on.

Informal communication networks are so widespread that it constitutes an important avenue by which information flows in organizations. Therefore, if an organization's formal communication represents its skeleton, its informal communication constitutes its nervous system. A point of note by Person et al (2003) summarized this: 'Organizational members create emergent networks because insufficient opportunities exist for formal communication and because formal communication networks fail to do the job.' A number of literature re-viewed, referred to the grapevine as an informal communication system. Evans (1990) mentioned bypassing as another informal communication channel. These are elaborated on below;

The Grapevine, often called the rumour mill, the grapevine is perhaps the best known informal communication channel. Every organization has its grapevine. The term describes the interlacing branches of a totally unofficial communication system which has been constructed informally and which is constantly changing. Even though the formal system has definite communication channels, the grapevine tends to develop and operate within organizations. Being the pathways along which unofficial, informal information

travels, information introduced into the grapevine travels quickly because messages are inhibited by structural constraints. In contrast to a formal organizational message which might take several days to reach its desired audience, information traveling along the organizational grapevine tends to flow very rapidly, often within hours. Lehman and DuFrene (2005) mentioned that, it beats sending a written memorandum or an e-mail. This is not only because informal communication can cross formal organizational boundaries but also because informal information tends to be communicated orally. The users and distributors of grapevine sources of information find their material in the form of confidential letters left unattended on desks, accidental careless remarks, loud voices coming from behind closed doors or sudden changes in established routines and practices. The basis of the grapevine is gossip and rumour (Evans 1990). It is often the cause of misplaced resentments, or unfounded fears. It flourishes more particularly in organizations in which communication channels are more closed than open.

The grapevine has no single consistent source. Messages may originate anywhere and follow various routes. Some managers actually leak new ideas or proposals to the grapevine to test worker response. Instead of denying or condemning the grapevine the effective manager uses this communication network. The grapevine can be useful in counteracting rumours and false information.

According to Evans (1990), bypassing is used when the urgency or importance of a communication required that the sender perhaps a managing director or sales manager chooses a route which bypasses any intermediate management or supervisory stages. For example, the managing director may wish to send an individual letter to all company

employees regarding rumours of a proposed merger. It is not worthy that this is done within the formal structure though some points of call are bypassed. Most middle managers are mindful of this. Too frequent bypassing of them in the communication process tends to lead to resentment. This route is, therefore, used judiciously.

2.3.0 Barriers to Effective Employee Communication

Effective communication serves four major functions. These are; Provides information to be used for decision making; Motivates employees to commit to organizational objectives; Control in the sense that it clarifies duties, authority and responsibilities; and is Emotive in that it allows the expression of feelings and the satisfaction of social needs.

Communication should always perform at least one of the above functions but our inability to understand what others communicate to us creates problems which we react to. Costely and Todd (1987) explained that, we do not react to message in isolation, but react to the relationship created by the situation, the message symbol, and the individual (sender). Focusing on the sender's meaning for the words and not the words itself gives meaning. Meanings are in people and not words. So any element that prevents a receiver to get the right information serves as a barrier to the communication process.

Every step in the communication process is necessary for effective communication. So any blocked step becomes a barrier as in, sender, encoding, medium, decoding, receiver, and feedback barriers. This is called the Process *Barrier*. Aldag and Stearns (1987), referred to receiver barrier as distraction, or psychological noise. It at times occurs when a recipient does not understand a sender's message because he is simply thinking about

something else. Thus effective listening is an important communication skill and poor listening skill is a barrier of a sort.

Sometimes a physical object such as ear protectors blocks effective communication. This is *Physical Barrier*. Distance is another form of physical barrier. Advocates of the domesticated office (offices designed more like home) emphasize social spaces rather than individual turf, in keeping with business emphasis on team work. The important factor is to strike a balance between easy contact and efficiency. Another aspect of the physical barrier is the medium to use as in the case of a supervisor with a soft voice wanting to give orders on a noisy office floor.

Semantic Barrier or “Coded noise” as Aldag and Stearns (1987) called it occurs, when the meaning of a message to the sender differs from its meaning to the recipient. In today’s specialized world, managers in such field as accounting, information technology, or advertising may become accustomed to their field and its technical language that they forget that people outside their field may not understand. To the receiver these jargons are vague, meaningless words and sentences that fail to convey messages effectively. Bennett (1995) suggested the use of short words and phrases, and avoidance of clichés and excessive technical jargons and repeating points to ensure that messages are received and understood as a remedy. Bruce and Langdon (2000) asserted that, heed should be paid to cultural differences, because in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, metaphors, similes, and irony are used in business dealings to strongly emphasize a point, but in the United States (US), Canada, and Germany, such figures of speech are more likely to be taken literary, causing possible unintended offense.

Psychological Barrier occurs as a result to peoples' background, perception; values; biases; needs; and expectation differ. Stereotyping, halo error, primacy and recency effects may lead to bias evaluation of a message. Sincere sensitivity to the receiver's needs and personal circumstances remedy it.

Misrepresentation takes various forms but deliberate lies are in the extreme. More often information may be subtly distorted to the senders benefit.

Message Distortion occurs because the chains of command might be stretched to impractical lengths that, messages take long periods to reach final users, with a high probability that message content is lost or distorted in transit. A strategy called redundancy – transmitting messages a second time often in another form or via another channel, has proven effective in avoiding distortions, as in following up an oral communication with a written memo or by verification.

Listening is the active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal message, involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal message (Pearson *et al.* 200). It is the other half of the communication equation so poor listening skills also serves as a barrier to communication. Feedback giving depends much on good listening in order to discern the message before reacting to it. Kreitner (1995) explained that, we can hear and process information much more quickly than the normal speaker can talk so, effective listening, according to the foregoing is very essential if communication is to take place unbarred.

2.3.1 The Effect of Communication on employees

According to Armstrong (2006), organizations are subject to the influence of continuous change which affects the work employees do, their well-being and their security. Feelings about work and the associated rewards depend very much on the effectiveness of communications from managers or team leaders and within the team. A good two-way communication is required so that management can keep employees informed of the policies and plans affecting them, and employees can react promptly with their views about management's proposals and actions. Effective management is very much about communicating management's intentions to employees and making sure that they understand how they will be affected.

The approach to internal communications could be based on; what management wants to say, what employees want to hear, and the problems associated with sending or receiving information. Analyses of these can be used to indicate the systems of communication that need to be developed and the education and training programmes required to make them work (Mullins 2007). They should also provide guidance on how communications should be managed and timed because bad management and poor timing are frequently the fundamental causes of ineffective communication.

What management wants to say depends upon an assessment of what employees need to know which, in turn, is affected by what they want to hear. Management usually aims to achieve three things: first, to get employees to understand and accept what management proposes to do in areas that affect them; second, to obtain the commitment of employees

to the objectives, plans and values of the organization; and, third, to help employees to appreciate more clearly the contribution they can make to organizational success and how it will benefit them.

Employees want to hear about and to comment upon the matters that affect their interests. These include changes in working methods and conditions, arrangements for working hours, organizational plans which may affect pay or security, terms and conditions of employment among others. Understanding this can be obtained by conducting focus groups discussions, attitude surveys, asking employee representatives, informally listening to what employees say and analyzing grievances.

Specific employee relations problems where communication failures have been the cause or a contributory factor, should be analyzed to determine exactly what went wrong and what needs to be done to put things right. The problems with channels of communication can be dealt with by introducing new or improved communications systems but for lack of skills, education and training should be employed.

2.4 Communicating a Company's HR Policies

Many companies devote substantial resources to developing corporate policies on a wide variety of subjects, but fall short when it comes to communicating these policies to employees. Unless the company devotes the same energy to educating the employees who are responsible for implementing and complying with corporate policies, the time spent on policy development is largely wasted. In addition, state and federal laws require

employers to notify employees of certain employment-related rights and obligations in writing. Consequently, employers need to insure that employees are adequately informed and, if necessary, be able to prove it.

According to Lourenco(2009),regularly communicating HR policies that spell out accepted codes of conduct and define breaches such as harassment and bullying build a better defence for the employer makes it less likely for an employee to say in their defence "I didn't know what I was doing was wrong".

Company policies are supposed to be living documents and should be updated in line with any changes to laws or address any potential HR issues such as the explosion of social media/networking use around the world. Updating the policy is the first step, but the most crucial part of the process is communicating the changes to staff.

2.4.1 Quality of Communication

A lack of a written policy can impede employee awareness and limits guidance on different possibilities in implementation. Even with written policies, sometimes they are poorly communicated, which also limits cognizance of the policy's availability and/or a lack of understanding of policy applicability to individual situations (Christensen 1999). Studies specifically related to awareness of HR policies support these notions. For example, survey research has indicated employees are not always aware of the availability of government mandated entitlements .One reason many fathers may not take parental leave is a lack of knowledge and clear communication of their right to use the policy. Employee groups without regular access to the organization's website and email (e.g., custodial staff, plant line workers, store associates) may be less aware of policy

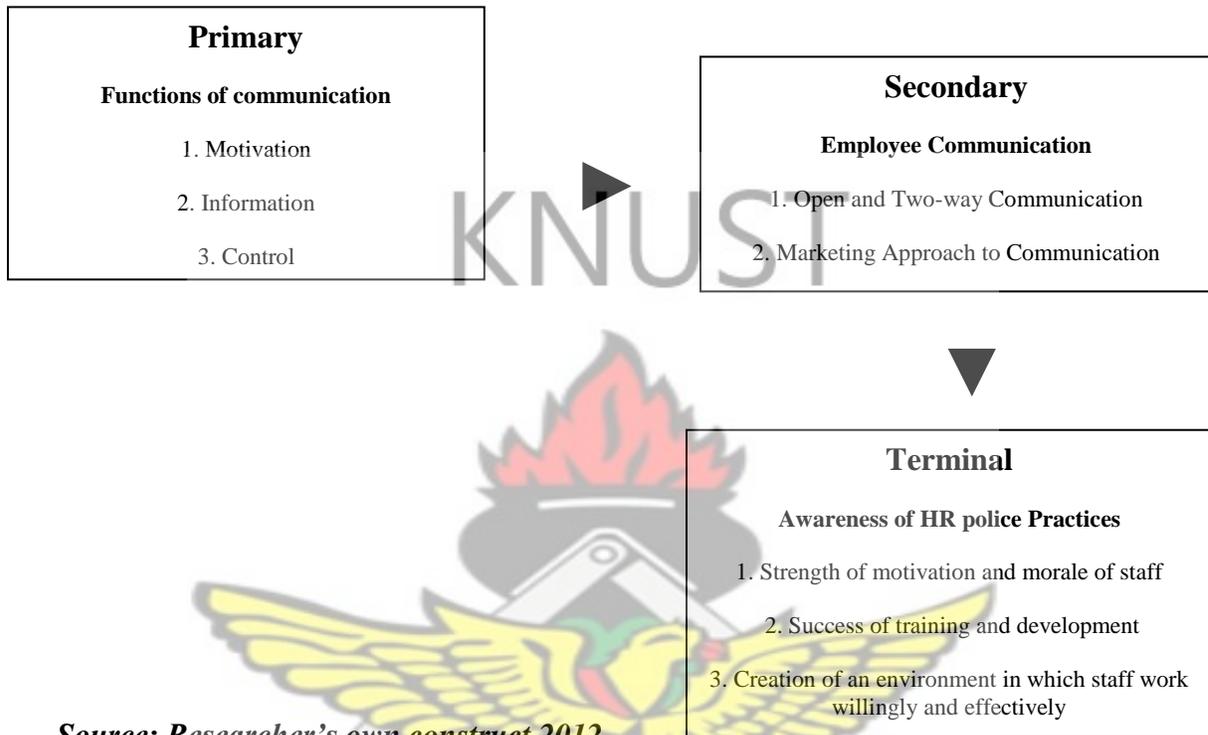
availability. Further, Casper, Fox, Sitzmann and Landy (2004) demonstrated that supervisors generally reported low levels of awareness of HR programs and this affected their referrals of employees to those programs.

Studies have long demonstrated that communication affects acceptance of HR and managerial innovation (e.g., Kossek, 1989). In their case study on organizational implementation of innovation, Nord and Tucker (1987) found that when there is communication on the features of the innovation and how it will be implemented, members feel consulted in the decision-making process and informed people show less resistance to change. The study found that even when implementation decisions are made at the top of an organization, if communication channels are open, dissatisfaction and resistance are much lower. Greater application of these concepts regarding quality of communication from the innovation and change management literatures should lead to greater perceptions of inclusiveness regarding the implementation of HR policies.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is formed of patterns of concepts and their interconnections. The first stage of theorizing identifies and clarifies concepts; the second stage concentrates on the connections and relationships between the concepts which may show cause and effect, stages in a process, hierarchical relationships, maps and coordinates, pairs of opposites, and similarities (Fisher 2007).

Table 2.1 Conceptual Framework of awareness creation of HR policies through employee Communication



Source: Researcher's own construct 2012

The above diagram is the graphical representation of the conceptual framework. Identified three blocks of variables labeled primary, secondary and terminal. The primary block is the functions of communication, made up of motivation, information and control. This is linked to the secondary block by the media of communication. The secondary block is employee communication made up of the open and two-way communication. The terminal block links the secondary by the General Systems Theory. The terminal block is communication of HR Policy leading to effective HR practices; containing the strength of motivation and moral of staff, success of their training and development and creation of an organizational environment in which employees work willingly and effectively. This in turn leads to the primary block.

2.7 Conclusion

The review of literature on employee communication showed that employee communication is very important and plays a very vital role leading to effective organizational HR Practices. Main point is that, HR Policies will produce a number of advantages for the organizations, as well as promote changes in a soft way, as they are monitored and announced by the line managers or specialist.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter of the research is devoted to explaining the methods used to obtain the needed information for the study. It explores the sources of data required for the study. Also it identifies the population, the sampling frame, and sampling techniques adopted to achieve the purpose of the study. Further the chapter explains the procedure used in the administration of questionnaire in the collection of data and data analysis techniques. Finally, the chapter provides the organizational profile of the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL).

3.1 Research Design

Dawson & Catherine, (2002); Kothari & C.R., (1985), indicated that research can be classified based on the following perspectives; Application of research study; Objectives in undertaking the research; and Inquiry mode employed. From their point of view of application, there are two broad categories of research: Pure research and applied research. Pure research involves developing and testing theories and hypotheses that are intellectually challenging to the researcher but may have practical application at the present time or in the future. The knowledge produced through pure research is sought in order to add to the existing body of research methods. On the other hand, Applied research is done to solve specific, practical questions; for policy formulation, administration and understanding of a phenomenon. It can be exploratory, but is usually descriptive. It is

almost always done on the basis of basic research. Applied research can be carried out by academic or industrial institutions.

With that background, the study embarked on applied research in order to solve the specific issue confronting GWCL in the Kumasi Region. The study was also descriptive. It described the nature of employee communication and awareness of HR policies and practice at GWCL. The research adopted a case study strategy. Robinson (2002:178) defines case study strategy as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. This strategy has a considerable ability to generate answers to the question why? as well as what? and how?. The choice of this research strategy therefore, was to enable the researcher find answers to the research questions and objectives.

The data collection techniques employed in the study was a combination of qualitative using semi-structured interview and quantitative using questionnaires. The qualitative approach allows flexibility in all aspects of the research process. It is more appropriate to explore the nature of a problem, issue or phenomenon without quantifying it. On the other hand, the quantitative approach determines the extent of a problem, issue or phenomenon by quantifying the variation .e.g. how many people have a particular problem? How many people hold a particular attitude?

3.2 Population

The population for the study was composed of the employer and employees of the GWCL Kumasi Branch. The organization employs a total of 386 employees of which 302 belong

to the class designated city employees, and 84 belonging to the class rural employees. Further, the population is categorized into Management staff, Senior staff and Junior staff. The number distribution is 10, 89 and 287 respectively as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Population for the study.

Employee category	Number
Management Staff	10
Senior Staff	89
Junior Staff	287
Totals	386

Source: Researcher's field work, July, 2012.

3.2 Sampling

The frame, that is, the complete list of all the cases in the population from which a probability sample was drawn (Saunders et al. 2009) was determined after an in-depth analysis of the selected business had been done. In total the sampling frame was 169. The respondents constituting the frame were selected from all the departments namely Customer Care, Distribution, Production, Accounting and Finance, Human Resource, and Management Information Systems (MIS).

3.2.1 Sampling techniques

Various techniques are used by different researchers to determine the sampling frame. The study used stratified sampling to group the respondents and further used simple random

sampling to select the respondents from the departments. Simple random sampling can be explained as a probability sampling procedure that ensures that each case in the population has equal chance of being included in the sample. The respondents were grouped under the various departments and every fourth person in each department was selected for the interview.

3.3 Data Sources

The research sought to find out how awareness on HR policies and practices could be created through employee communication. – A case study of the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL). To achieve this, the researcher made use of both primary and secondary sources of data.

3.3.1 Primary Source

Primary Source of data is considered an essential and perhaps the main source of data on which study is based. Saunders et al. (2009) explains it as data collected specifically for the research project being undertaken. The primary source of data therefore refers to firsthand information obtained or collected by the researcher through the use of questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The researcher made use of both open and closed-ended questions.

3.3.2 Secondary Source

In explaining its nature, Saunders et al. (2009) said it is data used for a research project that were originally collected for some other purpose. Sources of secondary data used by

the researcher included the office of the human resource Manager, textbooks, journals and internet.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

In an effort to collect credible data to provide answers to the research questions raised, a research questionnaire was designed to solicit information from the respondents. Interviews were also conducted to achieve the common objective of the study

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Fisher (2007) explains a questionnaire as a technique for collecting data in which a set of options or scenarios is developed and written into questions which respondents complete by entering their preferences or their judgments about the probability of each scenario. For the purposes of this work a close ended questionnaire was used for the study. This type of questionnaire was used so that respondents do not go astray in answering the questions.

3.4.2 Interviews

The study employed the use of semi structured interviews to augment information received from the use of other techniques. This availed to the researcher mainly qualitative information, ideas, and experiences of the respondents at the workplace. Total of 5 management members responded to the interview invitation.

3.5 Data analysis techniques

Analysis of data collected for research purposes can be done using various analytical methods. Both quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis helped the researcher in analysing data collected to extract relevant information. The quantitative method was used in striking percentages and presenting data in numerical terms where appropriate. These data were presented in simple tables and charts. On the other hand, analysis of qualitative data that could not be quantified were presented in the form of statements. It is important to note also that, with reference to the quantitative data, the researcher summarised, grouped, and structured the meanings using narrative. In other words, the researcher engaged in identifying, categorising data according to headings that will provide answers to the research questions and describing phenomena found in the text.

3.6 Organizational Profile

The following is a brief profile of the case study company.

3.6.1 Historical background of Ghana Water Company Ltd.

The Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) has a very laudable vision: “to provide potable water to all urban population in Ghana by the year 2015”. The organization also cherishes its mission to be committed to meeting the increasing demand for better service delivery through efficient and effective management of our core business – production, transmission, distribution of water and customer management. The organization is also guided by the following core values: quality customer service, dedicated service to the nation, high level integrity, and continuous improvement and innovation. Among the organization’s objectives are planning and development of water supply systems in all

urban communities, provision and maintenance of acceptable levels of service to consumers in respect of quantity of water supplied, making of engineering surveys and plans, and submission of tariff proposals to Public Utility Regulatory Commission for review and final approval.

The first public water supply system in Ghana, the Gold Coast, was established in Accra just before the World War I. Extensions were made exclusive to other urban areas, among them the colonial capital Cape Coast, Winneba and Kumasi in the 1920s. During this period the water supply systems were managed by the Hydraulic Division of the Public Works Department. In 1948, the department of Rural Water Development was established to engage in the development and management of rural water supply through the drilling of bore holes and construction of wells for rural communities. After independence in 1957, a water supply Division, with headquarters in Kumasi, was set up under the Ministry of Works and Housing with responsibilities for both urban and rural water supplies. During 1959, a severe water shortage in the country prompted a study and cooperation between the Government of Ghana (GOG) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and among the recommendations of the WHO, the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation (GWSC) was established in 1965 under an Act of Parliament (Act 310) as a legal public utility entity.

During the late 1970's and early 1980's, the operational efficiency of GWSC seriously declined which called for various government and donor interventions including those of the World Bank, IDA, ADB, GTZ, OECF, ECGD and CED/ADF. Sadly the numerous interventions proved fruitless since their general impact on service delivery was very

disappointing. Finally, pursuant to the Statutory Corporations (Conversion to companies) Act 461 of 1993 as amended by L.I. 1648, on 1st July, 1999, GWSC was converted into a 100% state owned limited liability company with responsibility for urban water supply only.

With the passage of Act 564 of 1998, Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) was established to be responsible for the management of rural water supply systems. Also in December 2004, the GOG invited bids for a five – year management contract, and in 2005 the bidding process was completed on 22nd November, 2005 with Vitens Rand Water Services BV of Netherlands, a consortium of Vitens International BV of the Royal Netherlands and Rand Water Services Pty of South Africa.

3.6.2 Products of Ghana Water Company Ltd.

GWCL was to be responsible for water supply and sanitation in rural and urban areas, the conduct of research on water and sewerage as well as the making of engineering surveys and plans, the construction and operation of water and sewerage works, and the setting of standards and prices and collection of revenues – together as their products, which emphasizes on its vision: “To provide potable water to all urban population in Ghana by 2015,” and mission: “committed to meeting the increasing demand for better service delivery through efficient and effective management of our core business – production, transmission distribution of water and customer management.

3.6.3 Organizational Structure of Ghana Water Company Limited

The structure of the regional branch begins with a general manager who oversees all activities carried out under various heads of departments who work under him. The heads of departments are the Production, Customer Care, Human Resource, Accounting and Finance, Distribution and Management Information Systems respectively. Additionally, the structure shows various officers who work under the heads of departments, many of whom are responsible to care for the plant stations distributed throughout the region. To complement the work of these departments, the GWCL also accommodates in its structure other officers such as Loss Control officer, officers in charge of the Meter Shop, a Communications Manager, Maintenance officers, as well as, Transport officers. Again, GWCL's structure shows the presence of a regional Project Manager, Quantity Surveyor, and Material Officers and assistants.

The works of most of the officers of various departments are to be located at stations designated East, North, North-east, North-west, South, South-east, West, Konongo, Mampong, Obuasi, and Offinso, Barekese and Owabi which shows a distribution throughout the company's area of operation at the regional level.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals mainly with the analysis of data collected and discussion of the results from the study. All data analyzed were primary data that were collected for the purpose of this research. In this chapter, the researcher arranged to personally distribute some questionnaires while the officers also assisted by distributing some questionnaires in the various departments. In all, 150 questionnaires were given out to workers of the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL). Thus, the respondents comprised of 10 management staff and 150 other employees who were selected from the senior and junior staff of the organization. Five management members responded to the researcher's interview invitation. The middle level and junior staff were from the customer care, materials, production, distribution, accounting, finance and human resource sections of the organization. The top level managers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide whilst the other employees responded to questionnaires. Out of the 150 questionnaires administered, 100 responded. Additionally, 5 out of 10 management staff were also interviewed. The rest of the respondents did not due to reasons including fear of them for fear of victimization and apathy. The researcher is of the belief that the 100 respondents constitute a representative sample size for the quantitative aspects of this work since they were drawn from almost all the sections of the organization. These respondents have worked in the company for a period ranging from six months to thirty-three years.

This analysis is made up of three parts. The first part analyzed the demography of the respondents and what effect their responses might have had on the research.

The second and third parts analyzed data on communication within GWCL gathered from questionnaires administered and interviews conducted. All the tables and charts used in the analysis are the researcher's construct, derived from the field work.

KNUST

4.1 Part 1: Demography of Respondents

4.1.1 Educational Background of Respondents

As part of the demographics of the sampled population the educational background was of essence due to the technical nature of the questionnaire. From the data gathered, out of the 100 staff interviewed 23 respondents representing 23% was revealed to hold their Bachelor's Degrees in various academic endeavors. This was followed closely with SHS and HND holders with 22% and 21% respectively. In the same vein, out of the 100 respondents it was revealed that 9 of the staff held Diploma qualifications followed by 7 respondents representing 7% with O' Levels, 6 staff representing 6% of the total was also identified as MSCL holders whilst 4 respondents each was revealed to hold Master's, A 'Levels and others respectively. From the backgrounds presented, majority of the respondents have graduated from tertiary institutions. This showed that their diction of the questionnaire items was good and the conclusions drawn by the researcher by and large reflected the true picture of the organization. Again, since majority of the respondents have graduated from tertiary institutions, they can easily read and understand the HR policies and even help in communicating the policies or informing their colleagues about

the content of the policies provided copies of the HR policies are made available to them.

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the educational background of GWCL staff.

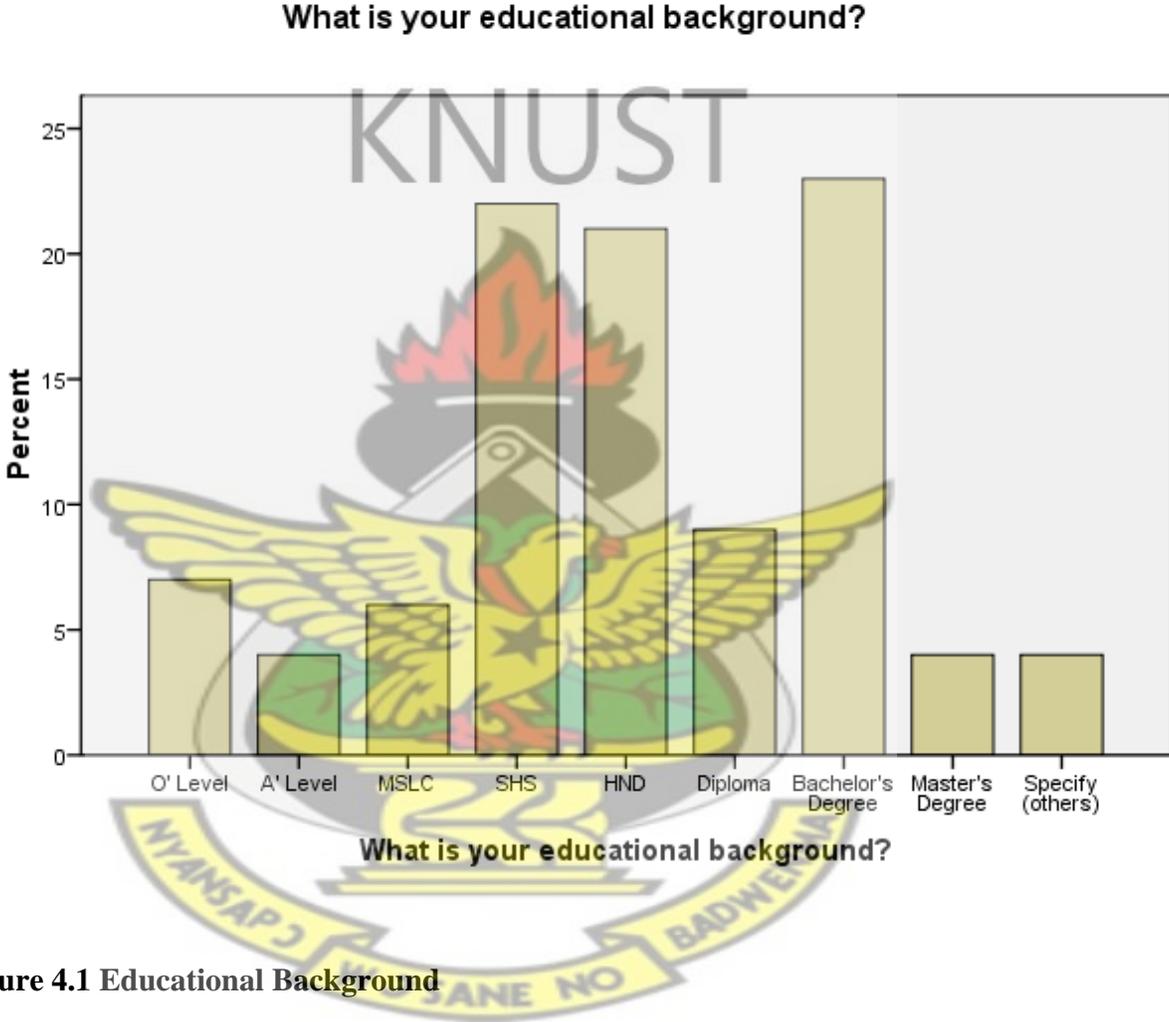


Figure 4.1 Educational Background

Source: field work, 2012

4.1.2 Department of respondents

The workers of the company have been grouped under the ten main departments namely customer care, production, distribution, human resource, accounting and finance, and management information systems (MIS). The rest are, materials, transport, audit, and geodetic information system (GIS) Table 4.2 above, depicts distribution of respondents across the various departments. From the table, 42 (42%) respondents were from the customer care department while 17 (17%) were from the production department. Also, 12 (12%) belonged to the distribution department. Again, 8 (8%) of respondents came from both the human resource and finance departments, while 5 (5%) were drawn from the audit department. Finally, 2 (2%) of respondents were from the MIS, GIS, materials, and transport departments respectively. The above data clearly shows that, many of the respondents were from the customer care department. This was the case since the company has a wider market and also handles a lot of customers. So much attention should be given to that department in terms of the communication of the HR policy. When they have access to the policy and get to know the benefit they will gain from it, they would be motivated enough to give off their best. This will no doubt increase productivity and raise the image of the company as well since they are the front liners of the company. The figure 4.2 below depicts the above departmental divisions.

What is your department of service?

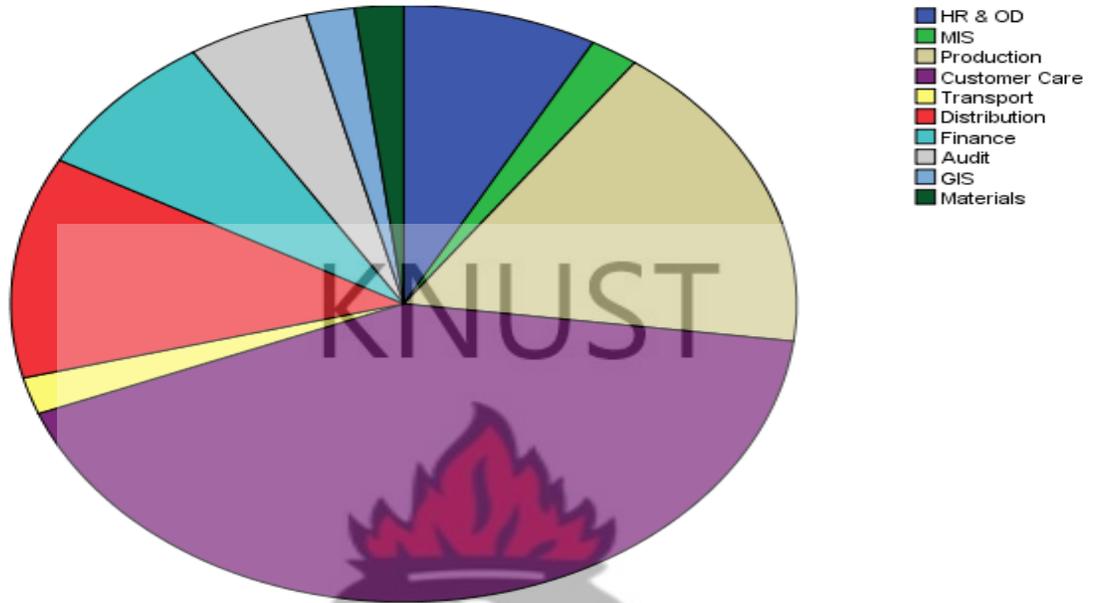


Fig 4.2 Departments of respondents

Source: field work, 2012

4.1.3 Position of respondents

The results gathered by the researcher indicated that 39 (39%) were from the management staff. The remaining 61(61%) of the respondents belonged to junior staff categories. This results show that, the HR department and management should do more in making sure they communicate the policies to majority of the junior staff. Table 4.1 below illustrates this information.

Table 4.1 Position of respondents

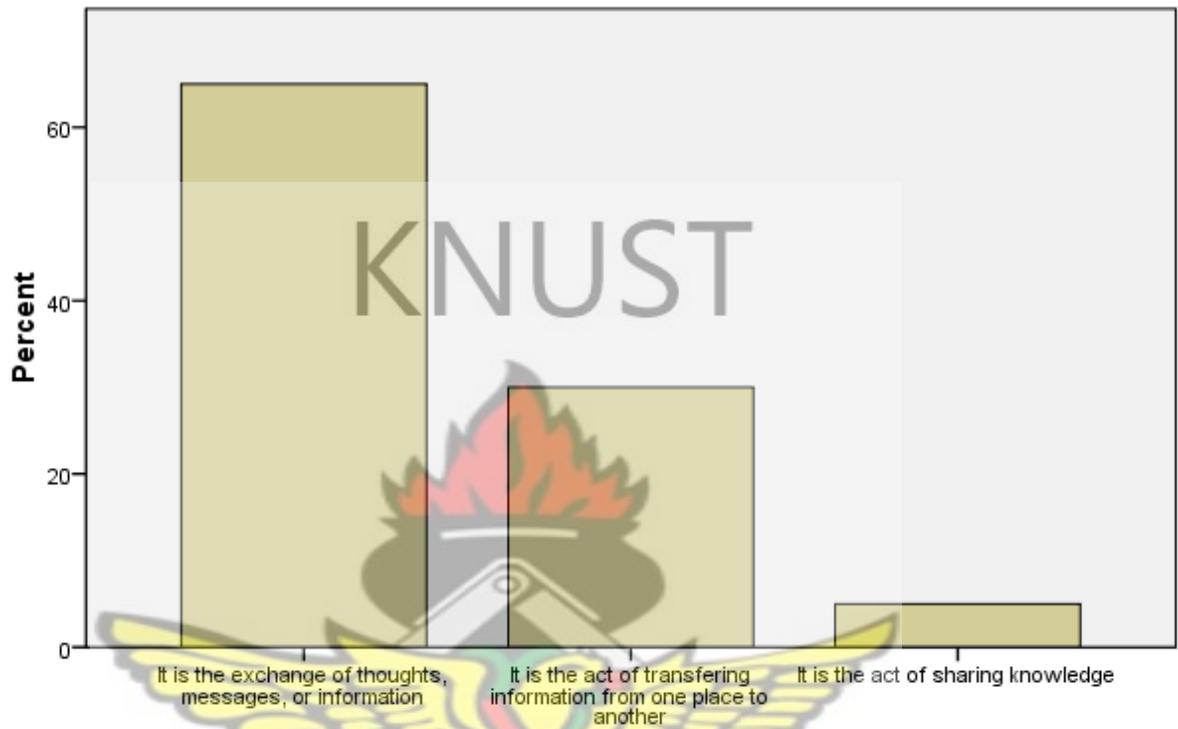
Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Junior Staff	61	61.0	61.0	61.0
Senior Staff	39	39.0	39.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field work, 2012

4.1.4 Employee understandings of communication

In order to determine the level of staff understanding of communication within the company, a question was posed for staff to indicate the understanding of communication and out of the total 100 respondents interviewed 65 representing 65% indicated that communication is the exchange of thoughts, messages or information followed by 30% respondents who believed that communication is the act of transferring information from one place to another whilst the final 5 respondents representing the least 5% indicated that communication is the act of sharing knowledge. Figure 4.3 below demonstrates staff understanding of communication within GWCL

What is your understanding of communication?



What is your understanding of communication?

4.3 Employee understandings of communication

Source: field work, 2012

4.2 Part 2: Communication of management policies within GWCL

The issue of communication of HR policies in simple terms and easy understanding gave a positive sign of communication, because understanding is key to effective communication. Therefore, a total of 43% of the respondents agreed to this. Only 16% disagreed with the explanation that their disagreement is as a result of certain technical expressions contained in the policy. This analysis no doubt meets the first objective of the study indicating that, employees of GWCL really know the HR policies and practices of their organization.

The figure 4.4 below illustrates communication of HR policies in simple terms and easy understanding.

My organisation communicates HR Policies in simple terms to make it easy for all to understand clearly



Fig 4.4 Communication of HR policy in simple terms

Source: field work, 2012

4.3 Accessibility to the HR policy

Table 4.2 Accessibility to the HR policy

Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Agree	5	5.0	5.0	10.0
Disagree	11	11.0	11.0	21.0
Strongly Disagree	56	56.0	56.0	77.0
Undecided	23	23.0	23.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field work, 2012

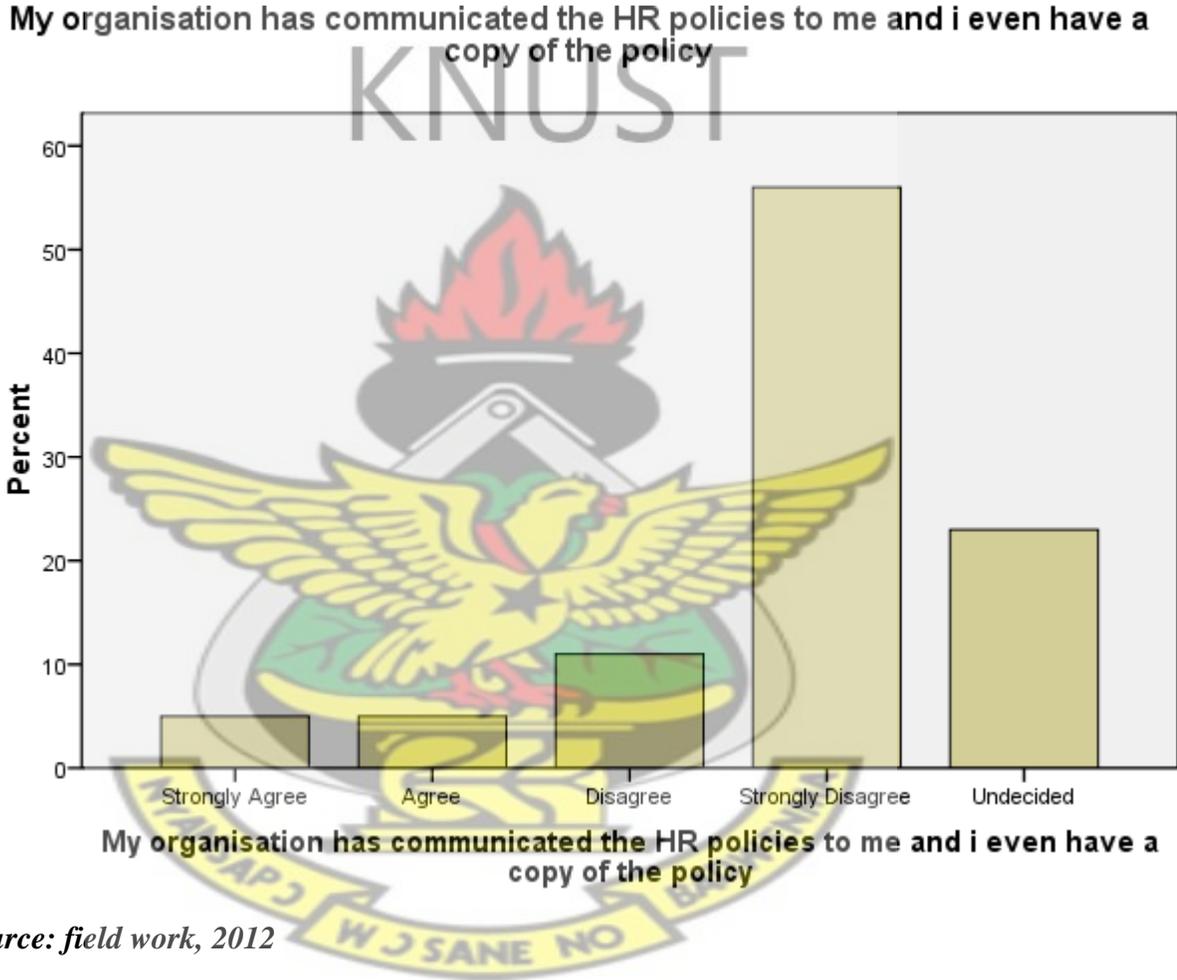
From table 4.2 above the respondents were asked to show whether they have been communicated to and have a copy of HR policies. Out of the 100 respondents interviewed, 56 representing 56 % responded that they strongly disagree been informed as well as having a copy of HR policy documents. The research also revealed that, 23 % of respondents were undecided and 11% who disagreed that they have been communicated to and given copies of HR polices. A total of 10% also said they strongly agreed and agreed to have copies of the HR policies documents.

It is interesting to know that, 10% of the respondents rather know of the company's collective bargaining agreements that are renewed almost every two years and not the actual HR policy document. The respondents interviewed generally indicated that this can be associated with lack of management efforts in this direction.

These dispositions surely will not auger well for the organization since HR issues permeate all aspects of the business and so failure to communicate such policies would

lead to chaos and definitely affect the industrial harmony and productivity as depicted in the problem statement.

This information is shown in figure 4.5 below.



4.4 How HR policies are communicated orally

Table 4.3 communication of HR policy orally.

Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
Agree	32	32.0	32.0	44.0
Disagree	40	40.0	40.0	84.0
Strongly Disagree	13	13.0	13.0	97.0
Undecided	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field work, 2012

From the above table (Table 4.3), majority of respondents totaling 40 (40%) disagreed for the policies to be communicated orally. However, only 12 (12%) agreed while a low of 3 (3%) were undecided. The rating showed that, it could not be a reliable means of communication of the policy since employees might want to own the document and when necessary make references to it.

Oral communication as a way of communicating HR policies is very effective in my organisation

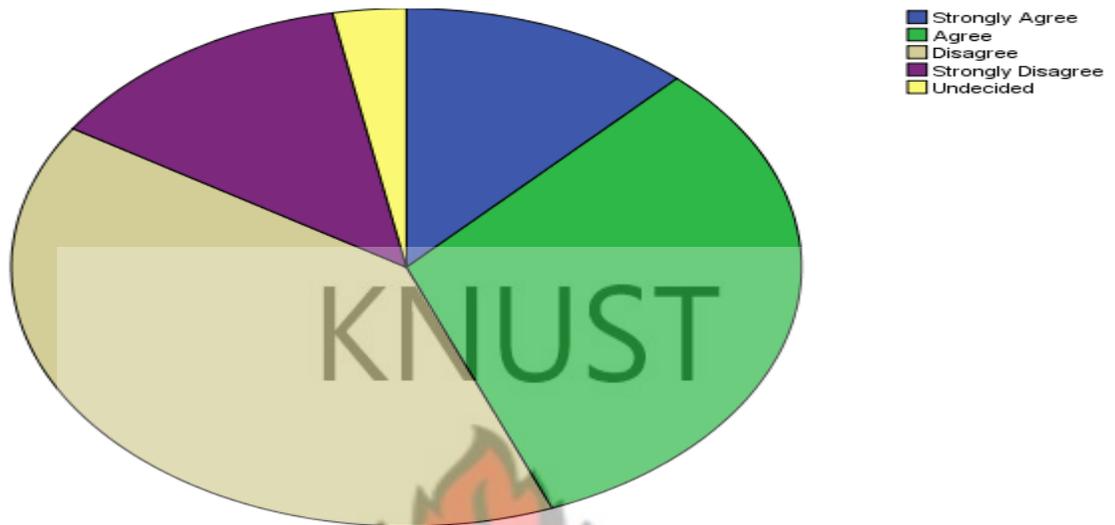


Figure 4.6
Source: field work, 2012

4.5 How HR policies are communicated-written

Table 4.4 written communications as a way of informing employees of HR policy

Rating	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	49	49.0	49.0	49.0
Agree	29	29.0	29.0	78.0
Disagree	19	19.0	19.0	97.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field work, 2012

These ratings really show that the organization was very good at written communication, a strength which they should project. In all, 78% of respondents interviewed Strongly Agreed or Agreed while a total of 22% disagree.

Written communication as a way of communicating HR policies is very effective in my organisation

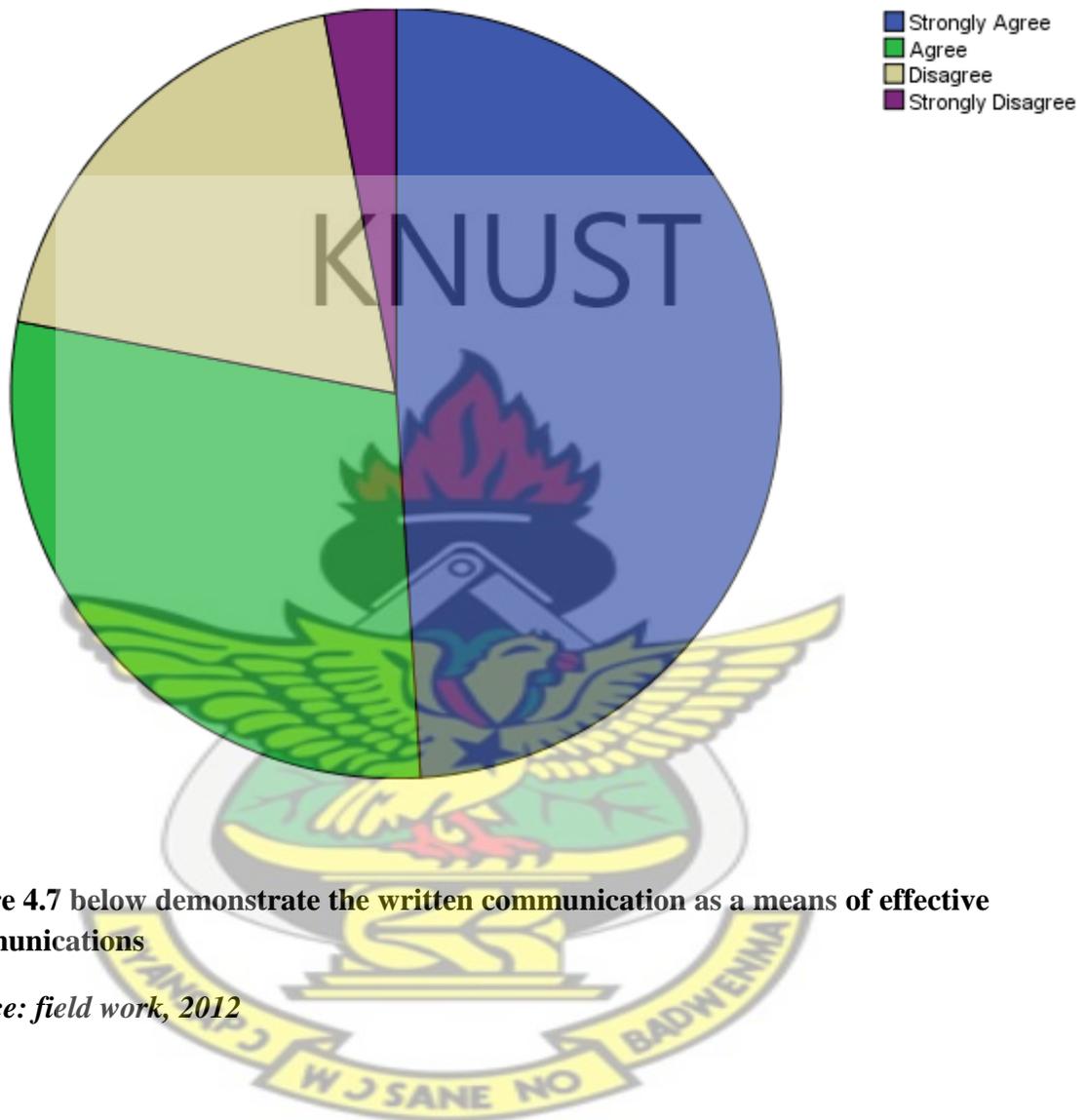


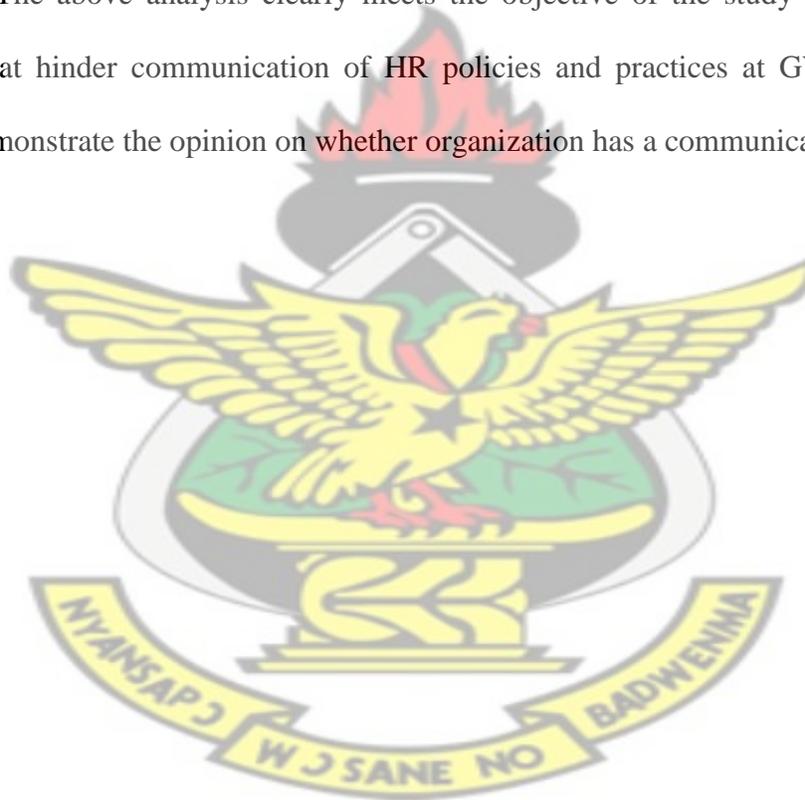
Figure 4.7 below demonstrate the written communication as a means of effective communications

Source: field work, 2012

4.6 Attitudinal challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization

This study has revealed that certain factors hinder the communications of HR policies at GWCL. Among the numerous factors mentioned, attitudinal challenge was the highest on the list. Staff opinion on whether organization has a communication problem was sorted and out of the total 100 respondents interviewed, 46 respondents representing 46% which

represented a figure close to half of the respondents indicated that they agreed that the issue of attitudinal challenges really hinder the communication of HR policies within the organization. 28 respondents representing 28% also disagree with the issue at stake. On the other hand, 20 respondents representing 20% also responded Strongly Agree to the assertion that attitudinal problems hinder communication of organizational HR policies. 4% and 2% respondents indicated that they strongly disagree and undecided respectively to the assertion that attitudinal problems hinders organizational communication of HR policies. The above analysis clearly meets the objective of the study in examining the factors that hinder communication of HR policies and practices at GWCL. Figure 4.8 below demonstrate the opinion on whether organization has a communication problem.



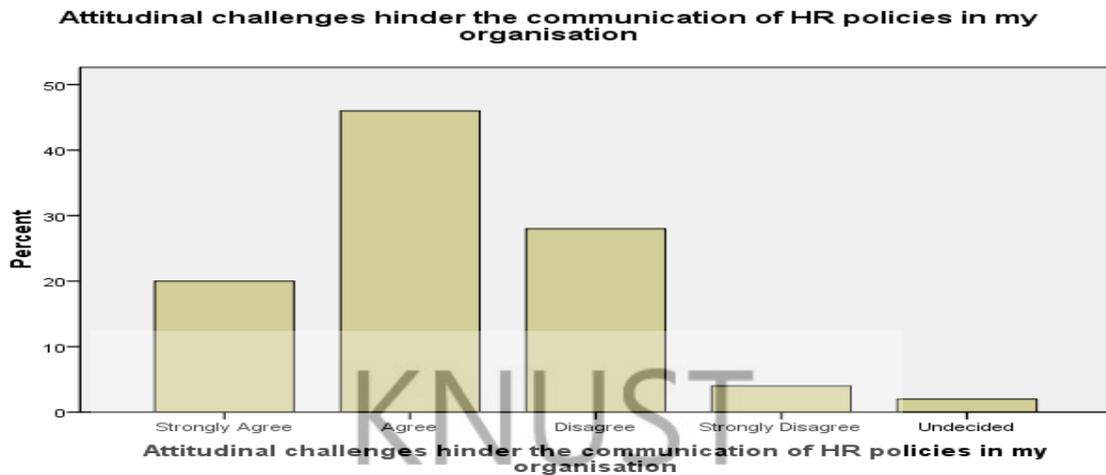


Fig 4.8 Attitudinal challenge hinder communication of HR policy

Source: field work, 2012.

4.7 Satisfaction of the current level of communication of the policy

As to whether the respondents were satisfied with the current level of communication of the HR policy, a remarkable number of 40 (40%) indicated they strongly disagreed while 31 (31%) stated that they simply disagree. Only 19% Agreed to that fact, while 10% of responded were undecided as indicated in Figure 4.9 below

The responses provided on the issue of satisfaction with the current level of communication of the HR policy stressed the need for Strategic HRM in organizations so that HR issues do not become the preserve or concern for only the HR department but feature in mainstream organizational strategy and planning. Again, the above analysis meets the objective of the study on whether the HR policies and practices of GWCL are being communicated effectively to the employees.

I am satisfied with the current level of communication of HR policies in my organisation

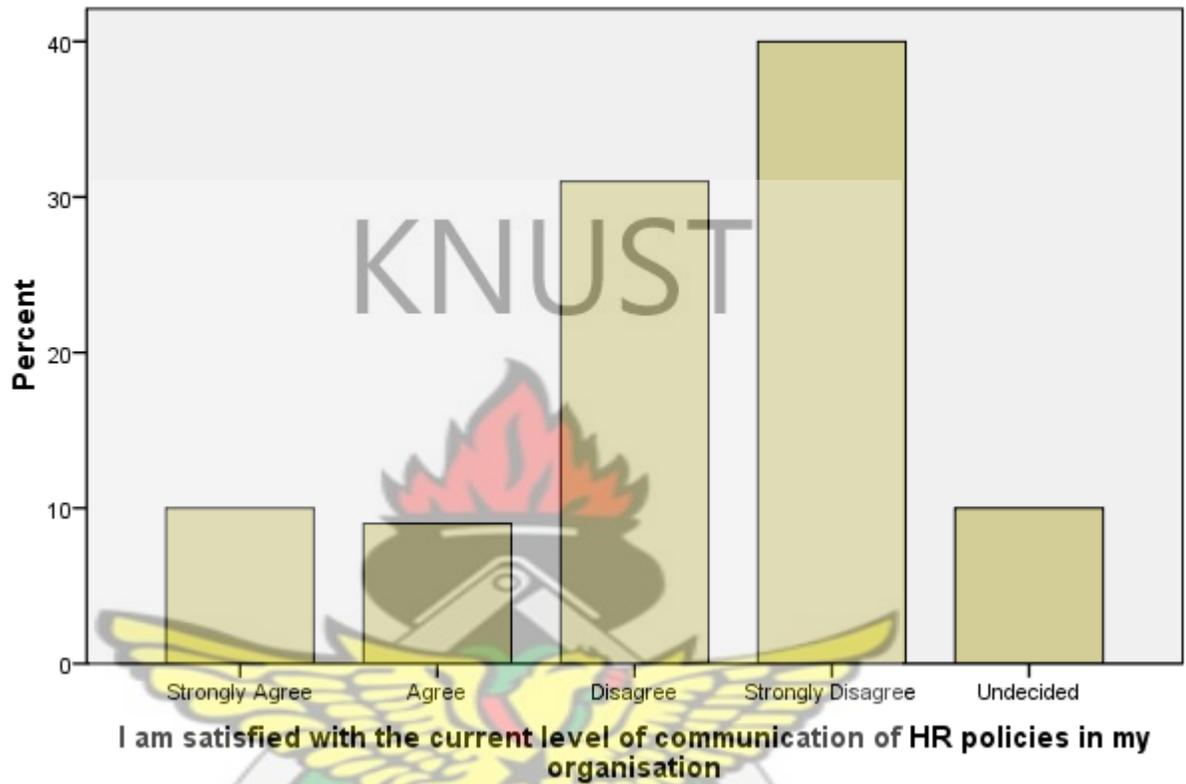


Fig 4.9 current level of the communication of HR policy

Source: field work, 2012

4.8 Best Ways of communicating effectively within the organization

The best ways of communicating effectively of the policy were grouped under five main headings namely, workshops, seminars, via e-mails, face-to- face and bulletin boards.

The use of workshops attracted 40 (40%) responds. This may be partly due to its blend of discussions and practical work on a particular subject to promote individual and group learning through the sharing of knowledge, skills and experiences. Also seminars, which

employs use of experts or resource persons to make presentations to foster learning gained 30 (30%). The use of e-mails, face-to- face and bulletin attracted low responses of 10 (10%) respectively.

The researcher agrees, to a large extent, with the respondents on the suggestions on workshops and seminars which when implemented with all seriousness can promote industrial harmony, higher productivity, and achievement of organizational objectives. Quite frankly, the analysis meets the last objective of the study.

Table 4.5 Use of seminar/ workshop as best ways of communicating effectively the HR policy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	49	49.0	49.0	49.0
Agree	38	38.0	38.0	87.0
Disagree	11	11.0	11.0	98.0
Undecided	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

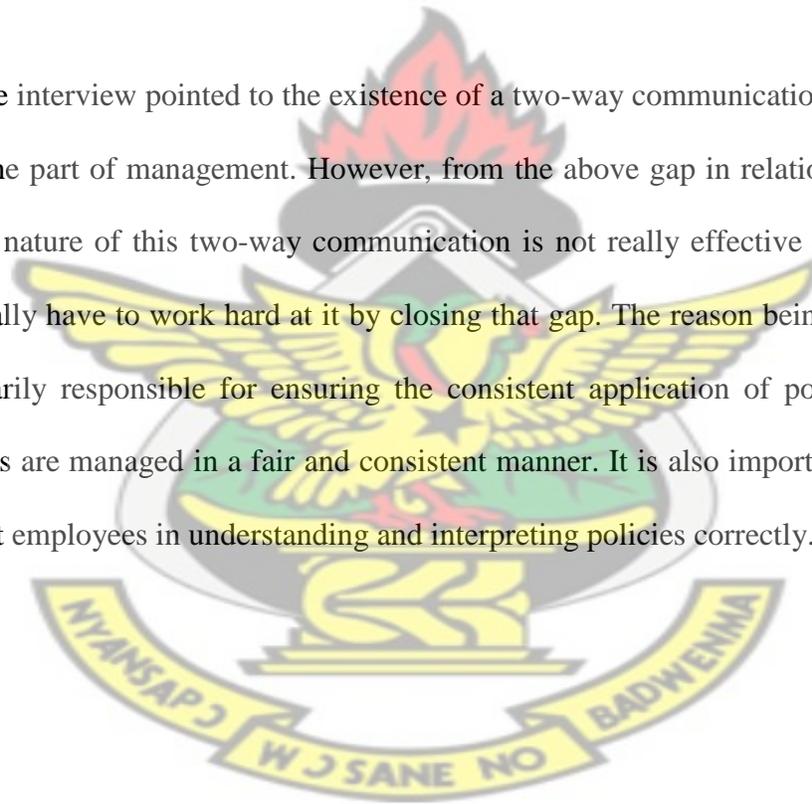
Source: field work, 2012

4.9 Part 3: Managerial communication

This part of the analysis took a closer look at various aspects of employee communication largely exhibited by management, with an emphasis on how both open and two-way communications were at play.

The researcher conducted oral interview with five (5) management members. These ones had worked longer with the organization. On the issue of them being aware of the HR policy, they all agreed they were aware and even have copies in their possession. On the other hand, the research revealed that, even though the policy were available at the management level, it was not so with other middle as well as junior staff. Clearly one could notice a gap in terms of information flow from top to bottom. As a result, the employees at the bottom (Junior staff) find it difficult to be part of the decision making process.

Again, the interview pointed to the existence of a two-way communication. This a positive sign on the part of management. However, from the above gap in relation to information flow, the nature of this two-way communication is not really effective and management would really have to work hard at it by closing that gap. The reason being that, Managers are primarily responsible for ensuring the consistent application of policies so that all employees are managed in a fair and consistent manner. It is also important for Managers to support employees in understanding and interpreting policies correctly.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the final of the thesis report. The chapter provides a summary of the main research findings. It also provides conclusions on the whole thesis. Additionally, it outlines recommendations which when employed can strengthen employee communication and effective HR practice in managing businesses and institutions. The chapter ends with suggestion on area for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this research present factual content as revealed by the previous chapter. Thus, it will aid readers to clearly understand the true state of affairs with respect to employees' communication at GWCL. Below are some of the key findings.

5.1.1 Communication of HR policies in simple terms

The study showed that a significant number which is almost half of the respondents (43%) agreed indicating they were aware of the existence of the policy. It even came up during the interview that, they had benefited from some portions of the policies that had been communicated to them. This indicated that, HR policies were communicated to them.

5.1.2 Accessibility of HR policy

The research revealed that majority of the employees, 56 (56%) said they don't have access to the policy document with the exception of management staff and some middle level managers.

5.1.3 Oral communication of HR policy

Responses gathered from the research indicated that, majority of respondents totaling 40 (40%) would not want the policies to be communicated orally. The reason being that, employees might not be able to make any reference to that oral communication.

5.1.4 Written communication of HR policy

The highest percentage of respondents on this question 78% of respondents interviewed did indicate that they would prefer the policy being communicated to them in written form. This they claim would enable them to make references to this document when necessary.

5.1.5 Satisfaction of the current level of communication of HR policy

The facts gathered from the study showed that, a remarkable number of respondents 40 (40%) indicated they were not satisfied with the current level of the communication of the HR policies and that, more needs to be done in that direction. Hence validate the need for the research.

5.1.6 Factors that hinder communication of HR policy

The research uncovered several challenges that hindered the communication of the HR policies. Notable among these challenges was attitudinal challenge which was the highest on the list. A total of 46% which is almost 50% indicated that. This can be as a result of poor management, lack of consultation with employees which was strongly observed by the researcher, personality conflicts which can result in people delaying or refusing to communicate, the personal attitudes of individual employees which may be due to lack of motivation or dissatisfaction at work, brought about by insufficient training to enable them to carry out particular tasks.

5.1.7 Ways of communicating the policy effectively.

The research revealed that, majority of respondents on the above question was of the view that, the use of workshops and seminars are the best ways of communicating the HR policies effectively. In all, 70% of respondents believe engaging employees through workshops and seminars couple with the written policy is the best way.

5.2 Conclusion

The study sought to find out how communication can be used as a tool to create awareness on HR policies and practices of employees at the Ashanti Regional Branch of Ghana Water Company Limited. The research directly examined this with the following specific objectives; to investigate whether employees of GWCL really know the HR policies and practices of their organization. Investigate whether the HR policies and practices of GWCL are being communicated effectively to the employees. Examine the factors that

hinder communication of HR policies and practices at GWCL. Finally, Find out how best HR policies can be communicated to employees of GWCL.

From the findings of this study it was concluded that, almost half of the employees were not aware of the existence of the HR policy. However, it came to light that, a remarkable number of employees were not satisfied with the way the policies were being communicated and that more need to be done in that direction. Since HR policies and procedures can be viewed by courts as part of the contract of employment. That means a well written policy is likely to be legally binding on both employees and the organisation itself as long as it is reasonable and complies with relevant laws. If the organisation fails to communicate its policies then it may be seen as failing in its duty to inform employees of their legal obligations. This failure may expose the organisation to actions via vicarious liability.

Furthermore, on the issue of having access to the policy document, employees expressed their dissatisfaction at management for not making them have access to the policy document. The findings also indicated that, employees preferred written communication of the policy to oral communication. Finally, employees were of the view that, the use of workshops and seminars are the best ways of communicating the HR policies.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings and conclusions drawn from the study were based on numerous observations made by the researcher. The researcher thus makes the following recommendations in relation to the findings emanating from this research to help deal with communication of HR policy among employees effectively.

5.3.1 Communication of HR policies in simple terms

The research revealed that, a total of 43% of the respondents agreed they were aware of the existence of the policy. The researcher recommends that, this is a positive development that should be sustained. Further, any change that is effected in the policy should also be communicated to employees for them to be aware.

5.3.2 Accessibility of HR policy

Due to the picture painted by the research that only (10%) possessed a copy of the policy it is recommended that, the following steps should be taken since this is not a positive development. At the start of employment and/or during employee induction programmes comprehensive employee handbook with all the mandatory and recommended HR policies and procedures should be made available to the employee. Secondly, a collaborative effort between the management and the union to make copies of the policy available at the workplace so that people can read these from time to time and be familiar with the content.

5.3.3 Written communication of HR policy

The research also revealed that, when it comes to the methods of communication, employees valued written communication as the most effective way of communicating the policy in the organization. According to them, if the policies are in written form it will help the employer to enhance the communication with employees, clarify the expectation and application. It will also help in creating the desire culture for the organization and minimizing legal risk thus validating the literature review.

However, the respondents reckoned that, an improved form of it would be most appreciated. It is therefore recommended that Management's use of other methods could help achieve effective communication of HR policies.

5.3.4 Satisfaction of the current level of communication of HR policy

Responses gathered from the research indicated that a significant number of respondents, that is 71% indicated that though management organised durbars to improve informal communication, it is woefully inadequate. It is recommended that management should ensure there is an on-going program of communication on HR Policies. Secondly, the need to educate frontline managers on HR policy can help avert several problems because they would be better equipped to pass these on to their members. Furthermore, regular training for managers in communication should be organized to improve management-employee communication for enhanced HR practices.

5.3.5 Factors that hinder communication of HR policy

No matter how good the communication system in an organization is, barriers can and do often occur. This may be caused by a number of factors. The research revealed that, attitudinal challenge was the highest on the list. A total of 46% which is almost 50% indicated that. The researcher therefore recommends that, management should be open and should be seen to communicate more of the policies to employees.

5.3.5 Ways of communicating the policy effectively

The research revealed that a high percentage of 70% of responded recommended the use of seminars and workshops respectively as effective ways of communicating the policies

effectively. The researcher therefore recommends a collaborative effort between management and employees to arrange for and finance periodic workshops and seminars to be able to communicate the HR policies to all employees effectively.

5.3.6 Management-Employee Relationship

The research revealed that employees were of the view that management had distanced themselves from them though it does not readily show. Managing these relationships is vital to business success, as strong relationships can lead to greater employee happiness and even increased productivity. It is therefore recommended that a two-way and open communication without fear of victimization. Again, there should be manager-employee teamwork and collaboration which involves employees in decision making especially, in matters that affect them.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the research findings, the following area is recommended for further research:

The researcher did not factor into the study the communication gap analysis between junior and senior staff and the likely causes within the organization. In view of this, the researcher suggests that any future research into employee communication in an organization, should consider the communication gap analysis between senior and junior staff.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent, this questionnaire is designed to collect data as part of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) thesis on exploring employee communication as a tool for creating human resource policies and practices awareness. It is purely for an academic purpose. Comments from you would be very much appreciated. Please, be assured that your responses would be treated with the needed confidentiality.

SECTION A

Demographic Data



Please tick from the information below that applies to you.

1. What is your department of service?

- | | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| HR & OD | <input type="checkbox"/> | MIS | <input type="checkbox"/> | Production | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Customer Care | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transport | <input type="checkbox"/> | Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Audit | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| GIS | <input type="checkbox"/> | Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

2. Rank (a) management (b) general staff

(b) Junior staff Senior staff

3. What is your educational background?

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| O' Level | <input type="checkbox"/> | SHS | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bachelor's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (specify) | | | | | | | |
| A' Level | <input type="checkbox"/> | HND | <input type="checkbox"/> | Master's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| MSLC | <input type="checkbox"/> | Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ph.D | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

4. What is your understanding of communication?

It is the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information

It is the act of transferring information from one place to another

It is the act of sharing knowledge

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Please tick to show your views over the following statements

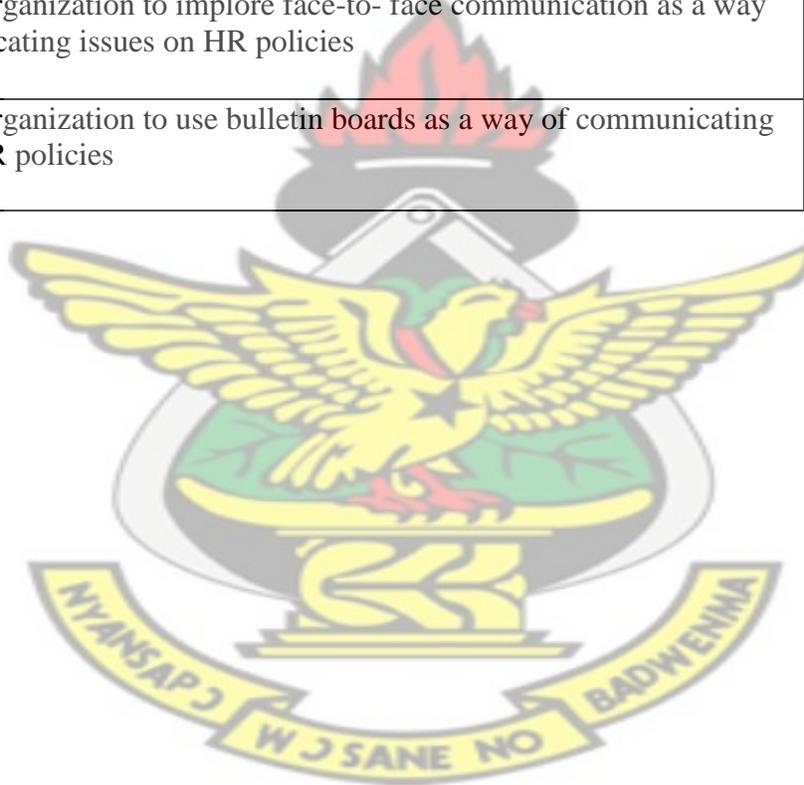
Please tick from the statements below to depict the level of agreement or disagreement on your awareness of HR policies within your organization	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
My organization has communicated to me all HR policies					
My organization communicates HR policies in simple terms to make it easy for all to understand clearly.					
My organization uses oral communication a lot to inform me on HR policies					
My organization uses written communication a lot to inform me on HR policies					
My organization uses non-verbal communication a lot on HR policies					
I understand my organization's HR policies more fully because it has been communicated to me					

Please tick from the statements below to depict the level of agreement or disagreement on your views on the effectiveness of the communication of HR policies	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Oral communication as a way of communicating HR policies is very effective in my organization					

Written communication as a way of communicating HR policies is very effective in my organization					
Non-verbal communication as a way of communicating HR policies is very effective in my organization					
I am satisfied with the level of communication in my organization.					
I am satisfied with the methods of communication in my organization.					
I am satisfied with the current level of communication of HR policies in my organization.					
I have benefited from my organization's HR policies because it has been communicated to me.					

Please tick from the statements below to depict the level of agreement or disagreement on your on the factors that hinder the communication of HR policies in your organisation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	undecided
Cultural challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization					
Attitudinal challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization					
Structural challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization					
Emotional/psychological challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization					
Internal challenges hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization					
One –way communication challenge hinder the communication of HR policies in my organization.					

<p>Please tick from the statements below to depict the level of agreement or disagreement on your on the Communication of HR policies effectively within the organisation.</p>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	undecided
I would prefer written communication to oral communications as the best way of communicating HR policies in my organization					
I want my organization to use seminar/workshop as a way of communicating HR policies in my organization					
I want my organization to communicate issues on HR policies via e-mails					
I want my organization to implore face-to- face communication as a way of communicating issues on HR policies					
I want my organization to use bulletin boards as a way of communicating issues on HR policies					



APPENDIX B

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (KNUST SCHOOL OF BUSINESS)

SEMI – STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MANAGEMENT

Dear respondent, this questionnaire is designed to collect data as part of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) thesis on exploring employee communication as a tool for creating human resource policies and practices awareness. It is purely for an academic purpose. It is purely for an academic purpose. Comments from you would be very much appreciated. Please, be assured that your responses would be treated with the needed confidentiality. Please, do not disclose your identity.

Below are the questions:

1. How long have you worked in your organization?
2. What is your philosophy of communication?
3. How do you communicate what employees need to know?
5. How do you know that employees understand what is communicated such as policies, work rules, organizational goals, mission, vision etc?
6. Do you receive feedback?
7. Are you aware of the existence of the HR Policies?
8. How did you become aware?
9. Are you satisfied with provisions in the policies?
10. What will you suggest as the best way of educating both employers and employees on the provisions in the policies?
11. What do you think are some challenges that hinder the communication of the HR policies?
12. What recommendations will you make by way of communicating the policies?

APPENDIX C

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study, some terms used required operational definition. The following definitions apply to the terms and expressions:

Employees and Respondents:

The two expressions were used interchangeably in the analysis of the data.

Management and Manager(s):

These were also used interchangeably to refer to those in decision-making positions of the organization. However, their usage was tailored to suit the need within a sentence and appropriately to give singular effect.

Staff and employees:

These terms were used interchangeably to refer to those who by way of work implement the decision made by management.

Interview

According to Pearson et al. (2003), an interview is a dyadic communication context with a purpose or goal. In an interview, two parties, a dyad, communicates in a pre-planned situation, primarily by asking and answering questions. The interview context like other interpersonal interactions normally involves a face-to-face encounter although interviewing increasingly occurs through e-mails, video conferencing and the telephone.

APPENDIX D

GWCL/AVRL ASHANTI REGION ORGANISATIONAL CHART

