

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF THE POST OF KOSOVO³

Effective and transparent communication among publicly owned organizations is considered crucial for enhancing the staff's performance and accomplishing strategic priorities. The paper examines the Post of Kosovo, as a major public enterprise and looks at internal communication and its impact on employees' efficiency. Drawing on survey analysis and interviews, we find that the Post of Kosovo, as a public enterprise applied a closed type of hierarchical management, with no formal structure of communication in the organizational scheme. Our findings indicate that communication in the Post of Kosovo is characterized by a lack of transparency, control and manipulation, and centralized decision-making structures. It also indicates that communication has a direct impact on employee motivation and overall organizational performance. Thus, the findings of the study contribute to the existing literature on public enterprise management in transition societies and provide valuable insights into how internal communication can be used as an important tool for organizational success.

*Keywords: public enterprise; internal communication; efficiency; the Post of Kosovo
JEL: L32; M12; M14; P31*

1. Introduction

In transitional societies, public enterprises are caught between two important processes. On the one hand, they are exposed to the pressure to modernize, transform and adopt to the market economy and the competition which comes from the private sector. On the other hand, the democratization of states also demands adjustment of the management style, norms, and principles which govern public enterprises. In other words, they are expected to operate based on the principle of good governance, transparency, and efficiency to justify their role as a national assets and market competitor. However, meeting such expectations is not an easy task. Public enterprises are not immune to political interference as well as internal management flaws. Yet, research shows that if public organizations, such as those governing

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the sector of energy, communication, transport, and other public services, can develop effective internal communication strategies coupled with internal good management are more likely to survive the market economy and retain their strategic and vital role in the transition from one political system to another one.

Existing literature shows that effective communication is an essential aspect of work relations among employees, at the professional or social level. This also allows the organization and its workers more transparency and greater alignment of daily expectations with strategic priorities (Smith, 2018). In this regard, the attention to the psychological aspects and social needs of the employees has emerged as a central feature, turning communication into a crucial factor for the productivity of an organization. Yet, as Anthony Giddens notes, in modern societies the majority of organizations tend to be more elastic. In other words, bureaucratic and organizational systems are more elastic than Max Weber thought they were, and their domination is challenged by less hierarchical types of groups and associations (Giddens 2004, p. 291). Existing studies on Kosovo's economic transition, especially those concerning public organizations, show that there is a lack of adaptability, transparency, and politicization of steering committees in public enterprises (KDI, 2014). As a result, low performance is identified as a characteristic of a significant number of public enterprises in Kosovo. This is a negative phenomenon, considering the fact that the public sector makes up a large portion of Kosovo's economy. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government of Kosovo supported public enterprises financially by providing interest-free lending, in order to ensure short-term liquidity (Aliu et al., 2022). However, no one has researched so far internal communication efficiency as an impacting factor on the performance of this enterprise.

The paper focuses on exploring the organizational communication efficiency of the Post of Kosovo. This case is of special interest for the Kosovo⁴ context, not only due to the lack of studies in this field, but it also may serve as an exploratory approach that highlights the importance of communication for organizational efficiency and good performance. We argue that looking at the case of the Post of Kosovo offers us valuable insights into how organizational communication takes place and impacts its performance, especially in a context where there have been rapid socio-economic development and significant change on the political culture of the country. In particular, we are interested to test two main questions. First, we want to explore whether the more closed and ineffective the communication in a company is, the lower the motivation of employees is, and as a result the weaker efficiency of the enterprise. Second, we want to explore whether a communication strategy, which empowers participatory management, has crucial importance in the performance of a company.

This case of the Post of Kosovo, as a public enterprise, is crucial as it helps understand the organizational dynamics in a country which has undergone multiple transitions in the past three decades. Namely, the transition from communism to democracy, the transition from war to peace and the transition from international administration to independent statehood

⁴ Kosovo is one of the six Western Balkan countries that declared its independence on February 17th 2008. However, it is still not recognized as a sovereign and independent state by five Member States of the European Union (EU) and continues to be opposed by Russia and China at the UN Security Council.

(Freedom House, 2021). These internal dynamics provide sufficient grounds to raise a number of important questions on the management model and the conditions which dictate its performance, productivity and realization of strategic goals. Namely, what is the quality of organizational communication in this enterprise? Does the Post of Kosovo have a communication strategy? What are the effects of internal communication on its efficiency? The research design of this study is qualitative and is based on semi-structured interviews with key personnel of the Post of Kosovo. Through interviews, we aim to explore the internal communication strategies, their effectiveness and their impact on the performance of the company. The interviews also aim to explore what are the main challenges and opportunities for the Post of Kosovo and how internal communication contributes to their success. The research will draw upon existing studies on organizational communication and public enterprise management in transition economies and will analyse the data collected from the interviews in order to identify the main trends in communication within the Post of Kosovo.

This paper finds that although the internal communication in the Post of Kosovo has improved over the years, this public enterprise has applied a closed type of hierarchical management, with no formal structure of communication in the organizational scheme. The internal communication in the Post of Kosovo appears to be characterized by a lack of transparency, tendencies for control and manipulation, and centralized decision-making. We also find that communication appears to have had a direct impact on employee motivation and overall business performance. Therefore, we argue that is important for the management of the Post of Kosovo to improve their communication structures and processes to ensure effective communication and maximize the potential of the enterprise. We hope that the findings of the study contribute to the existing literature on public enterprise management in transition societies and provide valuable insights into how internal communication can be used as an important tool for organizational success.

2. Literature Review

This section aims to offer a conceptual discussion and highlight the main theoretical contributions and perspectives on effective communication within organizations. All organizations need to find ways to successfully manage a fundamental paradox: they need to coordinate the actions of their members if they want to survive (Conrad, Poole, 2005, p. 20). George Mead considered communication as the main matrix of human society (Mead, 2012; Habermas, 1984). Within organizations, the approach towards communication has changed in accordance with the dynamic of the historical development of the concerned society. Scholars view it as a complex and multidimensional process through which organizational development is made possible. Performance in organizations entails satisfactory completion of tasks and duties set by the management. It is often measured in relation to the completion of contractual duties, as well as other everyday tasks, mid-term targets, and strategic goals. In turn, productivity and efficiency are understood as crucial hallmarks for measuring performance and outputs or outcomes. In other words, performance is the quality of work undertaken, whereas productivity is the quantity of the completed work within a certain time frame and expected outcomes. What glues together performance, productivity, and efficiency is effective communication (see Agboke, 2018). While effective communication increases

productivity due to encouraged motivation and improved relations among employees and employers, non-effective communication might result in insecurity, fear and dissatisfaction, which inevitably will result in a decrease of productivity (Mukelabai, Phiri, 2021).

Since in this paper, we explore the internal communication in the Post of Kosovo in the context of its performance and employee motivation, it is crucial to delve into the relevant literature on effective communication within public organizations. Scholars consider that effective communication is crucial for motivating the staff to perform better and enhance the overall efficiency of the organization (Robbins et al., 2013, p. 156). Two main theories of motivation are important to explore here: Herzberg's *Hygiene and Motivation Factors* and Vroom's *Expectations Theory*. According to Herzberg, managers who eliminate factors that cause dissatisfaction may bring peace (and order) to the workplace but not necessarily motivation. When these factors are appropriate, people will not be dissatisfied, but they will not be satisfied either. To motivate people in their work, Herzberg suggested a number of factors that increase job satisfaction (Blagoev et al., 2022). According to Herzberg, if an organization wants its employees to do a good job, it has to give them a good job to do (Giancola, 2010). Namely, the job description and the scope of tasks should be appropriate for the capacity and qualification of the concerned staff member. But, Lawler (1970) has a different point of view on the relationship between satisfaction and performance. The same maintains that it is not possible to increase the motivation of all employees by giving them a good job to do, because there are not so many "good jobs" in the organization to satisfy everybody (Blagoev et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) considers the individual's motivation as based on their goodwill for achieving certain goals and their belief that the motivation will lead to expected performance. This theory considers the following relationships:

- a) *Effort-performance relationships* – the probability that an extra effort of the employee will lead to higher performance;
- b) *Performance-reward relationship* – the extra efforts will lead to the desired outcome; and
- c) *Reward-personal goal relationship* – the importance that the employee gives to the result or reward that can be achieved through work.

The motivation theories underline the values and long-term goals set by employers as the main motivating factors. However, if we consider the differences between the public and the private sector, the assumptions of the above-mentioned theories should be contextualized in the function of the scope and purpose of this study. As El Mar notes (2021), continuous changes in management processes together with factors such as government ownership and the equal treatment of all employees regardless of their distinct qualities, make managerial efficiency in public enterprises more difficult.

In general, organizational communication serves four major functions: *control, motivation, emotional expression and information* (Robbins et al., p. 157). Completion of tasks by employees, encouraging them to perform better, their social needs and information about what should or should not be done, are possible through communication in organizations. For communication to occur, the message must exist and a certain meaning must be transferred

from the sender to the receiver. The message is encoded using symbols and through a medium (channel) passes to the receiver, who decodes it. Then the feedback returns through a channel to the receiver and the transfer of meaning from one person to another is realized. The communication process includes the sender, the message, the encoder, the channel, the decoder, the receiver and the feedback, but we should always consider the noise that can be caused by internal or external factors, and which can hinder the communication process. (Robbins et al., p. 159). The process of communication is based on four elements: transmitter, receiver, channel, and message. All these elements must exist in effective and appropriate communication and are equally important (Pirjol, Radomir, 2017). Communication enables the performance of an organization and the way in which objectives and its potential are obtained depends on its quality. Within every organization, there is an exchange of information between departments, employees, customers and between the organization's environment and the environment outside it (Moldovan, 2010, p. 7). In short, efficient and continuous communication between employees is a precondition for the assessment of an organization's current situation (Valkanova, 2019).

Beyond the function of communication, it is important to account for the type of communication too. The two basic types of communication that matter to managers in organizations are: *interpersonal communication* – communication between two or more people, and *organizational communication* – the patterns, networks and systems of communication within an organization. For interpersonal communication, managers have a wide variety of channels including face-to-face communication, telephone, group meetings, formal presentations, memos, publications, email, videoconferences, etc. The development of Internet and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has further expanded the range of channels that can be used in internal communication, such as social media or internal blogs. Although using multiple channels to communicate a message decreases the potential for distortion, the type of channel chosen will affect the extent to which accurate emotional expression can be communicated. In the framework of interpersonal communication, it is important to emphasize non-verbal communication, especially body language and paralinguistic, which are important for the efficiency of communication. Some of the most meaningful communications are neither spoken nor written, body language can communicate emotions or temperaments, and every oral communication also has a nonverbal message (Robbins et al., p. 161).

Next, what matters is the mode of communication in an organization, namely whether it is *formal* and *informal*. Formal communication refers to communication that follows the official chain of command or is part of the communication required to do one's job, whereas informal communication is communication that is not defined by the organization's structural hierarchy. The role of this type of communication is to talk about things that do not necessarily have to deal with activity and these networks are based more on emotional criteria, common interests having less strict communication rules (Pirjol, Radomir, 2017). The informal communication system fulfils two purposes in organizations: a) it permits employees to satisfy their need for social interaction; and b) it can improve an organization's performance by creating alternative, and frequently faster and more efficient channels of communication (Robbins et al., p. 166). According to Moldovan (2010, p. 8), formal communication takes place through terms and rules imposed by the organization. The proper

development of this type of communication is followed by a set of rules concerning the content, responsibility, shape and moment, but also the destination of messages.

Meanwhile, regarding the flow of information, there are four types of internal communication: *downward, upward, lateral and diagonal communication*. Downward communication entails any communication that flows from managers to employees is a downward communication. This type of communication is used to inform, direct, coordinate, and evaluate employees. Managers are also using downward communication when providing employees with job descriptions, informing them of organizational policies and procedures, pointing out problems that need attention, or evaluating and giving feedback on their performance. Upward communication entails any communication that flows from employees to managers is upward communication. Reports are given to managers to inform them of progress toward goals and any current problems. Upward communication keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, their co-workers, and the organization in general. Managers also rely on it for ideas on how things can be improved. Lateral communication entails communication that takes place among employees on the same organizational level is called lateral communication. In today's often chaotic and rapidly changing environment, lateral communication is frequently needed to save time and facilitate coordination. Finally, diagonal communication entails communication between employees of different levels and departments of the organization is diagonal. In the interest of efficiency and speed, diagonal communication can be beneficial.

Regarding the flow of information, researchers have modelled the *types of networks* based on the centralization of communication and the structure of channels. Two types of communication networks that have been derived from Leavitt, Bavelas and Barrett's laboratory experiments (1995, p. 121) are: *restrictive networks* and *flexible networks*. As Moldovan notes, the restrictive network has a different degree of centralization and the access of participation of people in the discussion is unequal. The central person has power over information and in this way, she can control the access to information of other participants. Otherwise, the flexible network is decentralized by the fact that all people have the same right and access to information. Thus, this network proves to be more effective by the appropriate encouragement of employees (Moldovan, 2010, pp. 7-8).

Another division of networks based on the channel structure includes the *chain* network, the *wheel* network and the *all-channel* network. In the chain network, communication flows according to the formal chain of command, both downward and upward. The wheel network represents communication flowing between a clearly identifiable and strong leader and others in a work group or team. The leader serves as the hub through whom all communication passes. Finally, in the all-channel network, communication flows freely among all members of a work team. According to them, no single network is best for all situations. If you are concerned with high member satisfaction, the all-channel network is best, if having a strong and identifiable leader is important, the wheel facilitates this, and if accuracy is most important, the chain and wheel networks work best (Robbins et al., p. 168). Organizations with a centralized management model are characterized by less effective communication. "If an organization is highly centralized, the messages will be exchanged, interpreted and changed many times until they reach the decision-makers at the top of the organization, just like the decisions that are taken – policies and procedures – shall be exchanged, interpreted

and changed many times until they reach the people at the bottom of the organization, who are to implement them” (Conrad and Pool, 2005, p. 75).

But, in order for the communication to be effective, as the traditional perspective sets out, two conditions must be met: a) the processes of giving and receiving messages should be exact and credible and b) the receiver of the message should understand and respond to the message in accordance with the aim of the sender of the message (Papa et al., 2008, p. 8). Among the types of communication networks, the *grapevine* network is also important, which exists in the informal communication of almost all organizations. This is important because a large part of internal communication takes place at the level of rumours or common conversations between employees, therefore it represents an important source of information that can be used by managers to increase the effectiveness of organizations.

The discussion in this section shows that effective communication is essential for good organizational performance and productivity. In general, communication processes are based on four elements: transmitter, receiver, channel, and message. Communication networks can be grouped into restrictive, flexible, chain, wheel, and all-channel networks. In order for the communication to be effective, two conditions must be met: a) the processes of giving and receiving messages should be exact and credible, and b) the receiver of the message should understand and respond to the message in accordance with the aim of the sender of the message. The informal communication network, such as the grapevine network, is also important, since a large part of internal communication takes place at the level of rumours or common conversations between employees, therefore it represents an important source of information that can be used by managers to increase the effectiveness of organizations.

3. Research Approach and Methods

So far in this paper, we have ascertained that effective communication is crucial for better performance of organizations. This section outlines the research approach and methods used to explore this puzzling question in the context of the Post of Kosovo, as a case study of a public enterprise or organization in Kosovo. Notably, the lack of studies in the field of organizational communication in Kosovo and the aim for serious research that studies the communication interaction with the efficiency of a company, besides being quite challenging in the scientific aspect, also imposes special attention on the methodological issues. Scholars suggest the use of several methods for data collection, the selection of which depends on the aim and access to resources (Kumar, 2012, p. 140). Therefore, having in mind the aim of this research, we have used various methods such as surveys, interviews, data analysis and desk research. The sample selection was made based on geographical representation, which includes the seven regions of Kosovo. Since the Post of Kosovo is currently operating with 120 active post offices, two employees from each office were surveyed, namely, 260 officials, comprising 27.8% of 938 total number of employees in this enterprise (ZKA, 2021). The survey included low-level employees in order to have a clear overview of the state of communication, and through their responses to identify the types and channels used in the internal communication of the Post of Kosovo. The respondents have been classified into the three following age groups: 18 to 35 years old (17.2% of total respondents), 36 to 50 years

old (49.2% of total respondents) and 51 to 65 years old (33.6% of total respondents). Thus, considering the number of respondents and their age, the sample is representative.

Since the main aim of this research is to explore the current state of communication in the Post of Kosovo and to identify whether there are any changes over time, the comparative analysis of the results was done using the same sample in 2016 and 2021. So, for a comparison of results with regards to the dynamic of change, the surveying of the same level employees with the same sample (systematic sample) was implemented twice within a 5-year interval, in 2016 and 2021. We raised the research question: what is the structure of internal communication in the Post of Kosovo and what are the effects of communication on its performance? The questionnaire was designed in such a way as to provide data on the types of communication and channels that are used the most, for their involvement in decision-making processes, forms of conflict resolution, their advancements or degradations during the time they work in this enterprise, as well as their relations with colleagues and superiors. Meanwhile, for qualitative data regarding the managerial approach toward internal communication, we have conducted *standardized interviews* with high-level managers of the enterprise. The interviews were conducted in the same time interval (2016 and 2021) and the same questions were used, except added questions in 2021 regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performance of the Post of Kosovo. The interview was designed in such a way as to explore the approach, model, and importance of internal communication from the managerial perspective, based on their duties and responsibilities (Post of Kosovo, 2017). As primary data for this research, we also used the basic documents such as the Law on Postal Services, the statute, internal regulations, and annual reports of the Post of Kosovo. The analysis of the interview data was done using qualitative techniques, while the survey data were analysed using statistical methods. These methods offer us an opportunity to present the data a descriptive way. Overall, the use of different methods of data collection, with a focus on the sample selection, provided us with reliable data and useful insights into the field of organizational communication. In line with the overall purpose of this study, which is to explore internal communication and its impact on the performance of the Post of Kosovo, we aim to investigate two research questions: 1) what is the structure of internal communication in the Post of Kosovo; and 2) and what are the effects of communication on its performance?

4. The Organizational Structure and Communication of the Post of Kosovo

This section explores the organizational structure and communication of the Post of Kosovo. The Post of Kosovo as a public enterprise was established by Kosovo's Government (decision No.16/53, 21.12.2011), and approved by Kosovo's Parliament (01.08.2012), following the demerger from 'Post Telecom of Kosovo' (PTK) L.L.C.. Postal services in Kosovo date back to the communist era of the 1950s when the Post, Telephone, and Telegraph of Kosovo (PTT) was founded and later operated as the Post and Telecom of Kosovo (PTK).⁵ A major implication emerging from this legacy is that this new public

⁵ The Kosovo Post Office (KPO) was well established and developed, until the 1980s after Kosovo's Autonomous status was abolished and KPO's employees were expelled from work in 1989. However, from 1990 until the end of the war (1999), the so-called Serb 'violent measures' came into power, which

enterprise was built on the old managerial socialist legacy of a centralized economy and has not yet achieved full transformation for the market economy conditions. Based on the Law for Postal Services (No.03/ L-173), the scope of work of the Post of Kosovo includes public postal services as a primary activity and other services that are related to its premises within the limits specified by its statute (Law No.03/L-173, Article 5). The vision and mission of this enterprise, as stated in its official documents, is to be a successful business and to provide continuous care for its customers as the leader in offering quality, fast, and safe postal services (Post of Kosovo, 2012). Moreover, the Post of Kosovo has engaged in cooperation agreements with various institutions and companies in the country, as well as in memorandums with international organizations. Membership in the Universal Postal Union (UPU) continues to hinder the development of the Post of Kosovo. Also, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the non-coverage of expenses by the government for the Universal Postal Service are reported to be the biggest challenges of 2021 (Post of Kosovo, 2021, p. 4).

The organizational scheme of the Post of Kosovo does not contain a formal *communication structure*. The Department for Marketing and Promotions (according to the organizational chart 2015), which was changed to the level of Directorate for Sales and Marketing in the organizational chart of 2016, includes three departments: sales, marketing and consumer support. This directorate does not have internal communication in its scope of work nor a public relations department (Regulation 2017, pp. 76-82). Although job descriptions have been specified for some positions within this directorate (e.g. '*ensuring continuous two-way communication between the client and the work team*'), which could be linked with public relations, they are reduced only to the function of sales officials and do not concern themselves with the general image or performance of the enterprise.

On the other hand, the managing structure of this enterprise is mostly hierarchical, with the Board of Directors at the top of the pyramid as the supervising body of the executive, making sure the development policies are implemented, with the high management that consists of Chief Executive, Vice-Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and the Secretary of the corporate, as well as the middle management organized horizontally with eight directorates branched in the level or regions and municipalities throughout Kosovo (Organizational chart, 2016). Therefore, the lack of a formal mechanism that would be in charge of managing the internal and external communication processes, makes effective communication impossible. This in turn has caused distrust in supervisor-subordinate relations, which continues to be almost the same in the last measurement in 2021. This is verified also by the responses from the interviews done in the research period, with the Human Resources Director and the Director of the Post Inspectors.

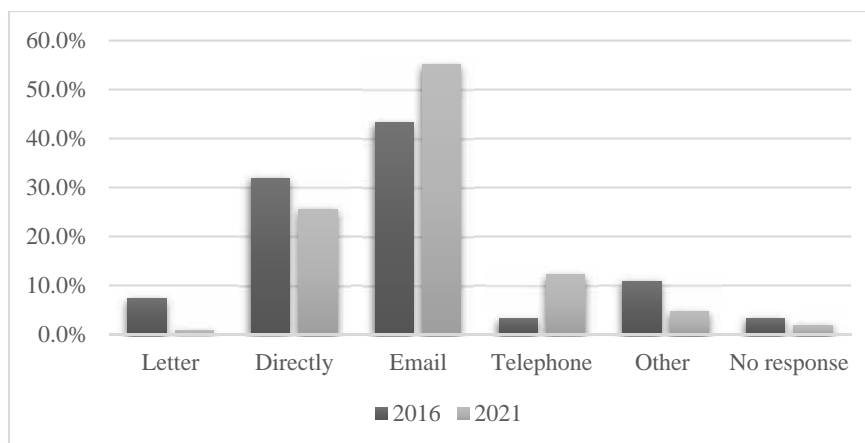
meant that every other government enterprise and institution was seized by the regime. During the war in Kosovo, KPO was in ruins. Just after the war, the enterprise's employees got back to their former workplace and the International Independent Post of Kosovo and the International Exchange Office of Kosovo LC/AO and CP started operating on May 31st 2000, which fulfilled the required criteria by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) for the exchange of postal shipments with the rest of the world.

5. Main Results

This section presents the main findings of this study. We find that the main factor which explains the change in the internal communication approach concerns the advancement of digital technological tools which are applied by the majority of organizations and institutions. The results of the survey with the employees of the organizational low-level show that within the five-year interval the forms of receiving tasks continue to be in favour of email and direct communication, from 43.3% to 55.1% for the former and from 31.9% to 25.4% for the latter. The use of telephone has also shown an increase in usage, from 3.5% to 5.2%, which could be explained by the increase in work dynamics and the impact of digital technologies. While task receiving through communication by letter has shown a decrease, from 7.4% to only 0.8%, as well as other forms which have shown a significant decrease, from 10.5% to only 4.7%. The respondents were instructed to use the option *other* if they receive the tasks in a combined manner (sometimes through email, and sometimes through telephone or directly).

In short, the results of the survey reveal that email and direct communication remain the primary forms of receiving tasks within the organization, while the telephone is becoming increasingly popular as a form of communication. Yet, Figure 1 shows a relatively low level of supervisor-subordinate communication and the transfer of information mainly through specific channels (e-mail), which makes the communication in this enterprise close to Likert's system 2 Benevolent Authoritative. The Director of Post Inspectors responded the same as in 2016 with regards to the forms of communication, by specifying verbal communication, letter communication and email as the main ones, while stating that he has noticed significant progress in *horizontal* as well as *vertical* communication within this time interval.⁶

Figure 1. In what way do you receive tasks from your supervisor?



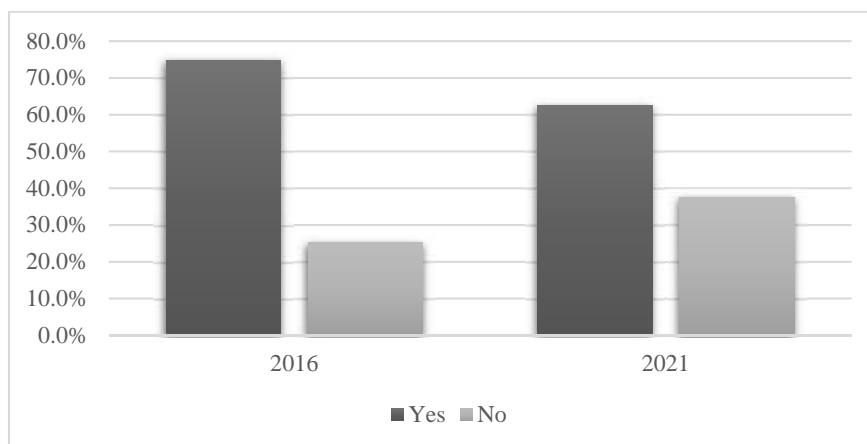
Source: Survey conducted for this research.

⁶ Interview with the Head of Inspection Department, The Post of Kosovo, 2016.

The results demonstrate that the use of letter communication is becoming increasingly uncommon as digital forms of communication are being prioritized. Therefore, the *formal* communication is based on the perspective of channels, because the management continues to take care of the communication from the top-down, while the communication bottom-up is more limited and mainly as a reporting of directorates that manage the operative level.⁷ Moreover, these findings point out that the Post of Kosovo does not have an effective communication structure that would enable it to communicate efficiently with its public. As a result, the image of the enterprise is not properly managed, and the supervisor-subordinate relations remain distrustful. Due to this, our interviewees within the Post of Kosovo considered the lack of an adequate communication structure the main problem of the enterprise, while the development of a communication strategy and a program for public relations is necessary, in order to increase communication efficacy in the future. To address this issue, a formal communication structure would be required for managing the internal and external communication processes of the enterprise. Additionally, these findings point out that the organization should consider revising the job descriptions of its employees in order to include communication responsibilities in order to promote a more open and trusting relationship between management and staff.

Nevertheless, the involvement of employees in working groups has marked a slight increase during these five years, although the suggestions and decisions of this form are not taken into account as much as they should. Figure 2 shows an increase of 12.5% of respondents, who reported they participated in working groups, which signals a positive change in the management's attitude towards the participatory model.

Figure 2. Have you been part of any working group?



Source: Survey conducted for this research.

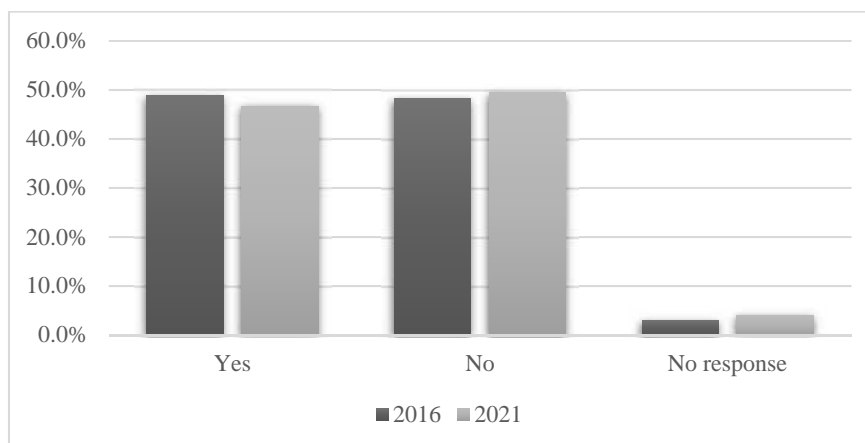
Based on McGregor's theory, the management approach results close to Theory X, according to which "a significant part of managers believe that employees don't like the work and try

⁷ Interview with the Head of Human Resources Department, The Post of Kosovo, 2016.

to avoid it, don't like responsibility, want someone else to lead them and value their safety at work above everything else" (Lawter et al., 2015, p. 86). This means that the communication in this enterprise continues to be non-effective and is still characterized by a lack of trust in the superior-subordinate relations. The Director of Post Inspectors in 2016 mentioned as an example the entering into force of the Code of Conduct, while in the last interview, he stated there was no such case. "On August 1st 2014, the new Code of Conduct for Employees (No. 01-263/14) entered into force, while we as directors were notified by mid-October 2014 through unofficial channels"⁸ (These findings point out that the management should provide the staff with the necessary resources and support, while the managers should foster a creative and stimulating environment, where employees can express their ideas and opinions. This type of environment is necessary in order to increase employee engagement, foster a sense of trust between the employees and the management and ensure better collaboration between the departments.

This management approach is corroborated also by the results of the survey, as outlined in Figure 3, where 46.7% of respondents stated they have been victims of injustice during their time of work in this enterprise, although this percentage was higher in the survey done 5 years ago. Employees continue, to a large extent, to be victims of injustice (48.9% in 2016 and 46.7% in 2021), although the results show a positive trend with regard to the number of cases. Despite the increase in employees' participation in working groups (37.7% in 2021 compared to 25.2% in 2016), most of them state that proposed decisions and solutions are not taken into account (70.5%), implying a very slow pace towards participatory management. Therefore, the employees' satisfaction at work continues to be low and has a negative impact on their motivation. Numerous studies have shown a great impact of satisfaction on the employees' motivation, while the level of motivation has an inevitable impact on the business performance of an organization (Aziri, 2011, pp. 77-86).

Figure 3. Did you have any injustice during the period of work in this enterprise?



Source: Survey conducted for this research.

⁸ Interview with the Head of Inspection Department, The Post of Kosovo, 2016.

The lower percentage, in this case, may be explained by the more inclusive approach of the management, although since April 2020 the board and management of the Post of Kosovo has been changed three times (Post of Kosovo, 2021). With the changes of government in Kosovo in 2020 and 2021⁹, two previous managements were discharged, while an acting chief executive holds his current position. This managerial instability defined the continuation of a constant financial crisis, although the 2021 report shows a slight decrease in losses of 26% less than in 2020¹⁰ (Post of Kosovo, 2021). Therefore, the measures for overcoming the crisis consist of also a slight improvement of the climate and the collegial relations in this enterprise. This seems to have had an impact also in the non-formal staff relations. The respondents' responses on the collegial relations show they are good and correct (98%), while with regards to the eventual disputes, the percentage of cases reported to the supervisors has increased, showing that there is a slight increase in the trust of superior-subordinate relation.

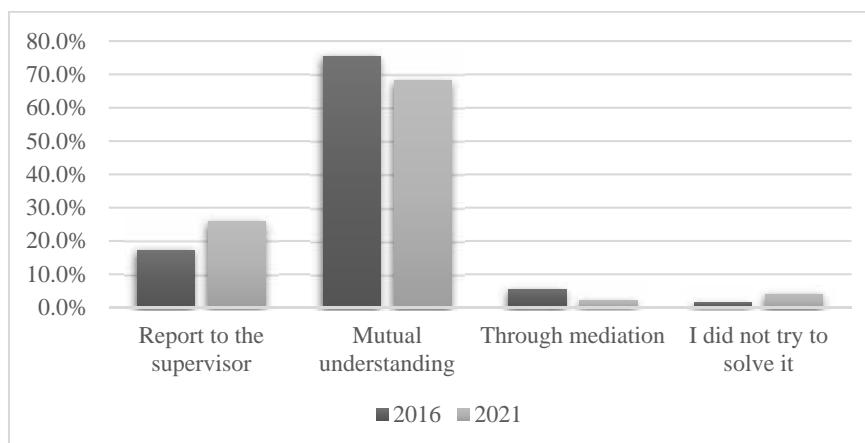
In this respect, these findings point out that the management of the Post of Kosovo had more scope to focus on creating a more inclusive working environment and to ensure that all staff members are treated equally and in line with the enterprise's regulations. This can be achieved by means of improved communication between the management and staff and by providing a safe and comfortable workplace with the necessary support and resources for the staff to perform their work successfully. Additionally, the findings show that there was scope for the management to continue to focus on increasing the trust between the staff and the management, by promoting a culture of openness and transparency.

Finally, the findings show that the 17.3% of cases reported to the supervisor, has increased to 25.7%, although overcoming their differences through mutual understanding remains the most preferred solution with 75.5% in 2016, namely 68% in the last measurement. The increase in cases where employees don't try to solve disputes which are proportional to the increase of cases reported to the supervisor, displays the improving trend of trust and a better general climate in the Post of Kosovo. Furthermore, as concluded by various reports of civil society organizations, the politicization of public enterprises expressed through the appointing of political persons in steering bodies remains one of the main causes for their low performance (KDI, 2021). Another analysis of the functioning of public enterprises concluded that "central public enterprises were the most suitable places for systemizing party militants" (KDI, 2014).

⁹ Government Kurti 1, formed after the elections in November 2019 discharged the board and chief executive. However only five months later it was overthrown by a no-confidence motion during COVID-19 Pandemics of 2020 and Government Hoti established by a wide coalition of opposition parties in June of 2020. The Hoti Government appointed the new board and management, who were also discharged again with the coming into power of Government Kurti 2, following the elections of February 2021.

¹⁰ We must note that almost all business have gone through financial difficulties in 2020. Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic was the main cause of this phenomenon.

Figure 4. In case of collegial dispute, how do you solve it?



Source: Survey conducted for this research.

As a result, it seems that the Post of Kosovo has been making efforts to improve the general climate and trust in the enterprise, by implementing various measures such as training on conflict resolution and mediation, creating a grievance procedure, and introducing disciplinary measures in case of misconduct. However, as in other Western Balkan countries, it seems that the situation does not differ much when it comes to internal organizational communication. A study done in 2015 found that the employees in Albania have a relatively low level of satisfaction at work and feel unworthy in their organizations (Furxhi and Osmani, 2014). Other studies show that in the economy of Montenegro, which is dominated by the tourism industry, there is a slightly better level of satisfaction at work as a result of organizational culture (Simovic et al., 2020). In North Macedonia, the reports suggest there is a need for a change of management approach towards the motivation and inclusion of employees in the function of productivity increase (Mitrevic et al., 2018). According to a study with regards to the communication and job satisfaction, employees in Serbia are more satisfied with internal communication as well as with the job they do – communication satisfaction and work satisfaction scores range between 4.7 and 3.7, respectively, on a scale from 1 to 5 (Djordjevic et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, by the end of the research period (2020-2021), the Post of Kosovo, just like the entire global economy, was affected by the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the Director of Postal Inspectors, the Post of Kosovo has meticulously implemented all the measures and recommendations of the competent institutions such as working with essential staff, social distancing, disinfection tools, and isolation of contact persons, but dealing with this crisis has resulted in a decrease of financial and non-financial performance of the enterprise.¹¹ As for internal communication, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the use of electronic channels such as email and telephone, but not other platforms made possible by Internet-based and digital technology, such as social media. Although the

¹¹ Interview with the Director of Postal Inspectors, Post of Kosovo, 2022.

restrictions during the pandemic have imposed online meetings, the Post of Kosovo has continued to hold the meetings with a physical presence in the framework of the Emergency Team. Meanwhile, downward communication in the form of decisions, announcements, requests and orders, was carried out via email communication.

6. Concluding Discussion

This study has examined the internal communication in the Post of Kosovo and has highlighted the importance of enhanced communication strategies for improving the efficiency of the enterprise. The results of the survey with the employees of the Post of Kosovo show that there is a slight improvement in the management approach in the past five years and that the communication between the employees and the superiors is gradually becoming more effective, while the trust between them is also increasing. Such improvements are mostly attributable to the availability and advancement of new digital technologies for organizational communication.

Although, the hierarchical style (top-down approach) and politicization of public enterprises such as the Post of Kosovo appear to also influence their performance. Senior management in organizations often assumes that power is preserved through controlling the flow of knowledge and information. This way of internal communication in Kosovo is especially present in public enterprises (Gap Institute, 2015). As shown in this study, the Post of Kosovo suffers from a lack of transparency and information flow from the top-down hierarchy. The Post of Kosovo is a central public enterprise with closed-type hierarchical management and no formal structure of communication in its organizational structure. As a result, the communication in this enterprise continues to be largely ineffective and is characterized by the insufficiency of information to the staff. Thus, based on the results of the survey on employee relations with superiors and considering the data on the weak performance of the Kosovo Post, communication appears to play an important role in shaping the productivity of the enterprise.

Yet, communication is not the only problem. Manipulation and control are also important. This is especially evident in societies with high unemployment levels and political interventions in the public sector, such as the case of Kosovo, where control and manipulation comprise the main engagement of high managers. In the case of the Post of Kosovo, this was expressed by various pressures towards those who did not express loyalty to management, while the opposite was for the reliable ones and those who have political support. Despite all improvements with regards to the general climate and trust in the supervisor-subordinate relation, the research results show that the information flow remains mainly in the vertical line from top-down, while the main forms of communication include email and direct communication, which in the 5-year interval have shown 11.8% increase, respectively 6.5% decrease. The increase of the use of email in the disfavour of direct communication is explained by the increase in work dynamics with the impact of new digital technology. However, in the five-year period, Post of Kosovo has not developed capacities for internal communication and as confirmed through interviews, there is no formal structure that would develop effective communication.

Thus, the findings in this research confirm our overall claim on the effects of internal communication on the performance of the company, in the sense of the consequences produced by the lack of adequate mechanisms, closed communication and centralized management. Along with other factors such as politicization, market competition and the global effects of technological development that might have had an impact on the business of the Post of Kosovo, organizational communication is also one of the main factors regarding the poor performance of this company. Therefore, the effects found in this longitudinal research with regards to the increased participation and decreased employee dissatisfaction should encourage the management to quicker changes towards a participatory model and an open communication structure, paying due attention to employees' motivation and self-actualization. However, this research study has its limitations. They are mainly related to management-level research due to their reluctance to answer challenging questions about employee motivation, lack of capacity and poor quality of internal communication, and lack of strategies for more effective adaptation to technological changes. Therefore, in order to generalize the results of the research, future research on this topic should be aimed at including a larger number of public enterprises in Kosovo. This paper can be useful as an attempt to explore the current situation and trend of changes regarding internal communication and its importance for organizational improvements in Kosovo. Despite the obvious limitations, this paper is believed to be contributing to the domestic literature in this field, since this topic has not been paid sufficient attention to so far.

Although this research suggests that the Post of Kosovo is making progress in terms of internal organizational communication and that the management approach is slowly becoming more inclusive, it is crucial that the management works on creating a more trusting and collaborative working environment which would ensure that all staff members are treated equally and in line with right-based frameworks and other bylaws. There is scope for the Post of Kosovo to devise appropriate communication strategies, such as open and transparent communication, to encourage employee effective participation and collaboration. Additionally, senior management should ensure that their employees are well-informed and aware of the company's goals and objectives, to ensure the efficiency of their work and to contribute to the organization's success. In sum, there is a need for the organization to focus on developing an effective communication structure in order to facilitate the exchange of information between departments and to better manage its public image.

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