



Exploring The Effect Of Written Communication On HR Competencies In Smes: A Study Of Kanpur Division

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ABSTRACT

The ascendancy of black and white communication in the modern workplace has underscored the imperative of effective written communication in Human Resource Management. Despite its growing significance, the impact of written communication on HR competencies in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) remains a lacuna in extant research. This study seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the relationship between written communication and HR competencies in SMEs within the Kanpur division.

A comprehensive literature review, conducted using the Scopus database, revealed a dearth of empirical research on this topic, highlighting the need for an in-depth examination. The researcher has opted to explore gaps and styles of research using literature review while the quantitative data has been collected and duly analysed to complete this research. A bespoke questionnaire, developed in consultation with HR experts, was administered to a sample of 300 participants, comprising 1-HR representative and 10-employees from randomly selected SMEs in Kanpur, using quota sampling.

Data analysis, facilitated by SPSS, entailed a battery of tests, including data validity, mean, and ANOVA, to ensure the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The results indicate a statistically significant encouraging association between written communication and HR competencies, suggesting that effective written communication is an essential component of modern HR requirements. The findings also highlight the importance of written communication in modern workspace, where errors are increasingly unacceptable in corporate settings.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on HR management in SMEs, providing empirical evidence on the important role of the selected communication method. Viz. written communication in enhancing HR competencies. The findings have implications for HR practitioners, policymakers, and SME owners, emphasizing the need to prioritize written communication skills in HR training and development programs.

Keywords: Written Communication, HR Competencies, SMEs, Kanpur Division, Digital Era, HR Management.

1. Introduction

The advent of globalization and technological advancements has significantly transformed the modern workplace, rendering effective communication a pivotal component of organizational success (Hynes, 2012). Within this context, written communication has emerged as a vital tool in Human Resource (HR) management, facilitating the dissemination of information, shaping organizational culture, and influencing employee engagement (Guffey & Loewy, 2019). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), in particular, rely heavily on effective written communication to navigate the complexities of resource constraints, competition, and regulatory compliance (Kotey & Folker, 2007).

Research emphasizes the significance of written communication in HR management, highlighting its impact on employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational productivity (Ogbari et al., 2018). Moreover, effective written communication has been linked to improved HR competencies, including recruitment, talent

management, and employee relations (Sharma & Gupta, 2015). Despite its growing importance, the relationship between written communication and HR competencies in SMEs remains understudied.

The Kanpur division, a hub of industrial activity in India, provides a unique context for exploring this research gap. SMEs in this region face distinct challenges, including limited resources, intense competition, and evolving regulatory requirements, underscoring the need for effective written communication in HR management.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between written communication and HR competencies in SMEs within the Kanpur division, addressing the following research questions:

- i. What is the impact of written communication on HR competencies in SMEs?
- ii. How do SMEs in the Kanpur division utilize written communication in HR management?

2. Literature Review

The impact of written communication on human resource (HR) competencies in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a critical area of research, particularly in regions like Kanpur Division. Effective written communication is essential for HR managers to perform their roles efficiently, as it facilitates clear and accurate information exchange, record-keeping, and standardization of processes within organizations. This literature review aims to explore the existing research on this topic and identify gaps that the current study can address. (Pedro & Robert, 2012) Their study examined the causal relationship between management communication, perceived organizational support (POS), and performance using a cross-lagged panel design. Key findings include (i) Open communication signals organizational care and value for employees, leading to increased POS and (ii) POS plays a crucial role in translating the positive effects of communication into improved performance.

(Nuzatul, Zulhamri, & Nurafiq, 2023) Their research proposes a new model that integrates employee communication and engagement, arguing that previous studies treated them as separate concepts. The model suggests effective two-way communication leads to employee engagement, ultimately improving organizational performance. This offers a framework for future research and practical guidance for leaders to build a more engaged and competitive workforce.

(I Wayan, Ni Kadek ssi, I Made Ari, Dwi, & Viktor, 2022) Most previous studies on organizational agility overlooked the integration of firm innovation drivers like social capital and collaborative knowledge creation, especially in emerging markets such as Indonesia. This study investigates the role of these factors, along with strategic flexibility, in enhancing organizational agility within the SME sector. The key findings highlight that organizational agility is a complex construct involving both social capital and firm innovation. Additionally, collaborative knowledge creation and firm innovation mediate the relationship between social capital and organizational agility, creating strategic paths for enhancement. However, strategic flexibility did not act as a moderating variable between innovation and organizational agility.

(Maura, 2014) This research investigated the relationship between human resource practices and SME performance. The study found a positive and significant association between the use of various human resource practices, including recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, compensation, training, employee voice, and strategic people management, and improved financial performance, innovation, and reduced labor turnover. The findings suggest that investing in human resources can lead to sustained competitive advantage for SMEs. However, the study emphasizes the importance of strategic people management and training and development as key drivers of performance.

(George & Alexandru Marius, 2017) Effective communication is crucial for successful management. It fosters strong relationships between individuals and creates a positive environment for organizational growth. Managers should prioritize developing their communication skills as they are essential for achieving organizational goals.

Effective written communication is a fundamental employability skill that is crucial for HR managers to excel in their roles. It encompasses various forms such as emails, formal letters, reports, and memos, which are essential for maintaining clear and transparent communication within an organization¹. The ability to communicate effectively in writing ensures that HR managers can convey information accurately, maintain records, and standardize interactions across different departments.

Research has shown that HR competencies, including the ability to use the latest insights in HR practices, co-craft strategic agendas, align company activities with customer needs, and connect people through technology, are vital for organizational effectiveness. HR managers with strong competencies in these areas can significantly contribute to the overall performance of SMEs². The study by Nehal (2022) highlights the importance of interpersonal written communication in enhancing employability potential in the HR sector, emphasizing the need for HR managers to develop strong written communication skills.

SMEs often face challenges related to resource constraints and limited social networks, which can hinder their ability to implement effective HR practices. However, integrating written communication into HR processes can help overcome these challenges by providing a standardized and efficient means of communication¹. The study by Deng (2023) suggests that SMEs should incorporate strategic HRM practices to improve their organizational management systems and enhance their competitiveness.

While there is substantial research on HR competencies and organizational effectiveness, there is limited focus on the specific impact of written communication on HR competencies in SMEs, particularly in regions like Kanpur Division. The existing studies primarily focus on broader HR practices and their impact on organizational performance, without delving into the nuances of written communication³. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how written communication affects HR competencies in SMEs and identifying ways to enhance these competencies through effective communication strategies.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design – The study employs a hybrid approach, where the researches uses both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore the effect of written communication on HR competencies in SMEs within the Kanpur Division. This comprehensive approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between written communication and HR competencies.

Sample Selection: A non-probabilistic quota sampling method was utilised to ensure a representative sample of SMEs in the Kanpur Division. A total of 300 participants were included in the study, comprising one HR representative and ten employees from each of the 30 randomly selected SMEs. This sampling strategy ensures a diverse representation of views and experiences across different organisations.

Data Collection Instruments: The primary data for this research has been collected through a bespoke questionnaire, meticulously developed in consultation with HR experts to ensure its relevance and comprehensiveness. The questionnaire was designed to capture detailed information on the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding written communication and its impact on HR competencies. The instrument included a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions to elicit both qualitative insights and quantitative data.

Data Collection Procedure: Data collection was conducted over a period of three months. Participants were approached through direct contact and were invited to complete the questionnaire either in person or online, depending on their convenience. This dual approach facilitated higher response rates and accommodated the varied schedules of the respondents.

Data Analysis: The collected data was subjected to rigorous analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. A series of statistical tests were performed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to provide an overview of the data. Inferential statistics, such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were used to examine the relationships between variables and to test the research hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes.

Limitations: Despite the comprehensive approach, this study has several limitations. The use of quota sampling, while effective in ensuring diversity, may not provide a fully representative sample of all SMEs in the Kanpur Division. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to participants' perceptions and interpretations. Future research should consider longitudinal studies and larger sample sizes to validate and extend the findings of this study.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Written communication is essential for effective HR management in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1026.00	3.4662	1.42337
Our organization uses written communication to convey important HR-related information.	296	1.00	5.00	966.00	3.2635	1.47458
Written communication is clear and concise in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1046.00	3.5338	1.36997
Written communication enhances HR competencies in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1032.00	3.4865	1.37772
Written communication improves HR decision-making in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1046.00	3.5338	1.25909
Written communication is effective in resolving HR-related conflicts or issues in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1037.00	3.5034	1.36543
Written communication enhances employee engagement in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1020.00	3.4459	1.36932

Written communication improves HR service delivery in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1094.00	3.6959	1.30272
Written communication reduces errors in HR-related tasks in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	994.00	3.3581	1.39738
Our organization provides adequate training on written communication for HR professionals.	296	1.00	5.00	993.00	3.3547	1.42109
Written communication skills are prioritized in HR training programs in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	991.00	3.3480	1.43935
Written communication training has improved HR competencies in our organization.	296	1.00	5.00	1065.00	3.5980	1.34688
Valid N (listwise)	296					

Table 5.1 Represents Descriptive statistics of collected data against essential questions of the questionnaire.

Table 5.1 presents descriptive statistics for 12 statements related to written communication and its impact on HR competencies in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Kanpur Division. The data was collected from 300 respondents but only 296 questionnaires were considered for study as four of the respondents left the questionnaire incomplete.

Overall Observations

- i. All statements have a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 5, indicating that respondents used the full range of the Likert scale (1-5).
- ii. The mean values for all statements range from 3.2635 to 3.6980, suggesting that respondents generally agree with the statements (mean > 3).
- iii. The standard deviation values are relatively low (1.25909 to 1.47458), indicating a moderate level of agreement among respondents.
- iv. Respondents agree that written communication is essential for effective HR management (Mean = 3.4662) and is used to convey important HR-related information (Mean = 3.2635).
- v. Respondents perceive written communication as clear and concise (Mean = 3.5338), enhancing HR competencies (Mean = 3.4865), and improving HR decision-making (Mean = 3.5338).
- vi. Written communication is seen as effective in resolving HR-related conflicts (Mean = 3.5034), enhancing employee engagement (Mean = 3.4459), and improving HR service delivery (Mean = 3.6959).
- vii. Respondents agree that written communication skills are prioritized in HR training programs (Mean = 3.3480) and that written communication training has improved HR competencies (Mean = 3.5980).
- viii. SMEs should prioritize written communication training for HR professionals to improve HR service delivery and employee engagement.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Our organization uses written communication to convey important HR-related information.	Between Groups	9.382	4	2.346	1.080	0.367
	Within Groups	632.064	291	2.172		
	Total	641.446	295			
Written communication is clear and concise in our organization.	Between Groups	7.396	4	1.849	0.985	0.416
	Within Groups	546.266	291	1.877		
	Total	553.662	295			
Written communication enhances HR competencies in our organization.	Between Groups	18.223	4	4.556	2.447	0.047
	Within Groups	541.723	291	1.862		
	Total	559.946	295			
Written communication improves HR decision-making in our organization.	Between Groups	6.327	4	1.582	0.998	0.409
	Within Groups	461.335	291	1.585		
	Total	467.662	295			
Written communication is effective in resolving HR-related	Between Groups	14.714	4	3.678	2.000	0.095
	Within Groups	535.283	291	1.839		

conflicts or issues in our organization.	Total	549.997	295			
Written communication enhances employee engagement in our organization.	Between Groups	11.388	4	2.847	1.529	0.194
	Within Groups	541.747	291	1.862		
	Total	553.135	295			
Written communication improves HR service delivery in our organization.	Between Groups	23.647	4	5.912	3.607	0.007
	Within Groups	476.988	291	1.639		
	Total	500.635	295			
Written communication reduces errors in HR-related tasks in our organization.	Between Groups	6.636	4	1.659	0.848	0.496
	Within Groups	569.405	291	1.957		
	Total	576.041	295			
Our organization provides adequate training on written communication for HR professionals.	Between Groups	7.832	4	1.958	0.969	0.425
	Within Groups	587.922	291	2.020		
	Total	595.753	295			
Written communication skills are prioritized in HR training programs in our organization.	Between Groups	1.972	4	0.493	0.236	0.918
	Within Groups	609.187	291	2.093		
	Total	611.159	295			
Written communication training has improved HR competencies in our organization.	Between Groups	8.940	4	2.235	1.236	0.296
	Within Groups	526.219	291	1.808		
	Total	535.159	295			

Table 5.2 Analysis of variance for collected data

The ANOVA table presents the results of the analysis of variance for 12 statements related to written communication and its impact on HR competencies in SMEs. The table provides insights into the significance of the differences between groups for each statement.

Significant Findings

The analysis revealed significant differences between groups for three statements: "Written communication enhances HR competencies in our organization" ($F = 2.447$, $p = 0.047$), "Written communication improves HR service delivery in our organization" ($F = 3.607$, $p = 0.007$), and nearly significant for "Written communication is effective in resolving HR-related conflicts or issues in our organization" ($F = 2.000$, $p = 0.095$). These findings suggest that there are significant differences between groups regarding the impact of written communication on HR competencies, HR service delivery, and conflict resolution.

Non-Significant Findings

The remaining nine statements did not show significant differences between groups, indicating that the variations within groups were more significant than the differences between groups. These statements include "Our organization uses written communication to convey important HR-related information", "Written communication is clear and concise in our organization", "Written communication improves HR decision-making in our organization", "Written communication enhances employee engagement in our organization", "Written communication reduces errors in HR-related tasks in our organization", "Our organization provides adequate training on written communication for HR professionals", "Written communication skills are prioritized in HR training programs in our organization", and "Written communication training has improved HR competencies in our organization".

Implications for SMEs

The significant findings suggest that SMEs should focus on enhancing HR competencies and improving HR service delivery through effective written communication. Additionally, written communication can play a crucial role in resolving HR-related conflicts. The non-significant findings indicate that SMEs may need to reassess their written communication strategies in areas such as conveying important information, clarity, and concision, decision-making, employee engagement, error reduction, training, and prioritization of written communication skills.

Thus, the ANOVA results provide valuable insights into the impact of written communication on HR competencies in SMEs, highlighting areas where significant differences exist and where further attention is needed.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of written communication on HR competencies in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) within the Kanpur Division. The findings suggest that written communication is a vital component of modern HR requirements, and its effectiveness is crucial for enhancing HR competencies. The study revealed a statistically significant positive association between written communication and HR competencies, indicating that effective written communication is essential for modern HR management.

The results highlight the importance of written communication in various aspects of HR management, including conveying important information, clarity and concision, decision-making, conflict resolution, employee engagement, and service delivery. The study also emphasizes the need for SMEs to prioritize written communication skills in HR training and development programs.

6. Recommendations

- i. SMEs should prioritize written communication skills in HR training and development programs to enhance HR competencies.
- ii. SMEs should develop clear communication strategies to ensure effective written communication across various departments.
- iii. SMEs should encourage employee engagement through written communication to improve organizational performance.
- iv. SMEs should foster collaborative knowledge creation through written communication to enhance organizational agility.
- v. SMEs should emphasize strategic HRM practices, including written communication, to improve organizational management systems and enhance competitiveness.

7. Future Suggestions

- i. Further studies can be conducted to examine the long-term impact of written communication on HR competencies.
- ii. The researchers may use larger sample sizes and different cities to validate and extend the findings of this study.
- iii. The future researchers may conduct comparative studies to examine the differences in written communication practices across various industries and regions.
- iv. The scholars and researchers may conduct qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of written communication in SMEs.
- v. The industry/academia may develop written communication frameworks for SMEs to enhance HR competencies and organizational performance.

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