

Promoting a path for organizational competitiveness: the role of internal communication

Daniel Roque Gomes, Joana Lobo Fernandes e Rosa Maria Campos Sobreira
Escola Superior de Educação - Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra

Abstract

Internal Communication has a unique remit of conceptualization and action when discussing Organizational Communication. Knowing how to manage internal communication represents an important value for competitive organizations by allowing cohesion and internal inclusion. When analyzing the aims of Internal Communication, it is pertinent to question in what way promoting its articulation with Human Resource Management supports an improved organizational performance directed towards the organizations' internal publics.

This study sustains the pertinence of understanding the predictive abilities of Internal Communication regarding some important individual-organizational relations, which are usually studied by Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior analysts. It assumes the empirical interest in clarifying whether Internal Communication predicts the workers' commitment, as well as to clarify if organizational procedural justice intervenes in this relation.

Participants of this study were 153 workers of an organization in the hotel business industry, which voluntarily responded to a questionnaire composed by measures of organizational commitment, internal communication and procedural justice. Main results have evidenced that internal communication predicts the workers' affective commitment towards the organization. Results have also evidenced that organizational procedural justice mediates this relation.

We conclude that internal communication influences the way how the equity of the organizations' procedures is perceived by the workers, which leads to the building of an affective bound between the workers and the organization.

These results and conclusions are discussed and interpreted in what relates to its theoretical, empirical and practical added-value. We also discuss the benefits of the articulation between internal communication and human resource management in order to improve professionals' practices towards the organizations' internal publics.

Key-words

Internal communication, Human resource management, Affective organizational commitment, Organizational procedural justice

Resumo

A Comunicação Interna tem um espaço próprio na articulação das diferentes dimensões da Comunicação Organizacional. Gerir eficazmente a comunicação interna representa uma margem de conquista de inclusão, coerência e de uniformização interna indispensáveis para qualquer organização competitiva. Dadas as finalidades da Comunicação Interna, é pertinente questionar de que forma a promoção da sua proximidade com a Gestão de Recursos Humanos beneficia uma actuação profissional direccionada para os públicos internos articulada.

O presente estudo sustenta a pertinência em averiguar em que medida a Comunicação Interna tem poder preditivo sobre a qualidade de algumas relações individuo-organização, tendencialmente trabalhadas pela Gestão de Recursos Humanos e pelo Comportamento Organizacional. Assume o interesse de esclarecer se a Comunicação Interna é preditora da vinculação de colaboradores, e procurará clarificar de que modo a justiça procedimental intervém nesta relação.

De forma a cumprir os objectivos apresentados, participaram neste estudo 153 colaboradores de uma organização do sector industrial, que responderam voluntariamente a um questionário composto por medidas de comunicação interna, implicação organizacional afectiva, e percepção de justiça procedimental.

Os resultados evidenciam que a comunicação interna activa processos de vinculação afectiva entre colaborador-organização. Evidenciam ainda que a percepção de justiça procedimental exerce um efeito mediador no contexto desta relação.

Conclui-se que a comunicação interna influencia positivamente a forma como se entende a equidade de procedimentos na organização, o que, consequentemente, leva ao estabelecimento de um vínculo afectivo entre colaboradores e a sua organização.

A importância destes resultados e destas conclusões é interpretada sob os pontos de vista teórico, empírico e prático. Serão discutidas as mais-valias da articulação das práticas profissionais de comunicação interna e de gestão de recursos humanos de forma a beneficiar uma actuação mais integrada junto dos públicos internos das organizações.

Palavras-chave

Comunicação interna, Gestão de recursos humanos, Implicação de colaboradores, Percepções de justiça

1 Introduction

It's not possible to have organizations without people, and without minimum efforts to manage them and to manage their communication (Bach & Sisson, 2000; Orlitzky, 2007). The realism of this assumption has lead academics to develop wide debates concerning the ways of achieving competitiveness based on this human side of organizations. This discourse has been acknowledged by managers, as they are increasingly gaining awareness regarding the importance of people for organizations' competitiveness. This is surely related to the fact that both academics and entrepreneurs have showed for quite some time, that organizations need to have efficient procedures when dealing with their workers (Orlitzky, 2007). It's quite usual to find entrepreneurs and academics mentioning that the human factor is nuclear for organizations to find ways of positive differentiation, and to achieve higher goals (Neves, 2002; Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu & Kochlar, 2001).

This discursive plethora has in its root the building of a path towards quality and performance, starting in the internal publics, that is to say, in the organizations' workers. This reality seems to have gained influence in nowadays global and harsh markets' contexts, as it has been strongly boosted by current economic trends that force organizations to be better than their competitors. The "war for talent" issue (Michaels, Hanfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001), the internal competitive demands issue, and the strategic sense attributed to Human Resources and of their management (Pickles, Bookbinder & Watts, 1999; Orlitzky, 2007), represent unequivocal evidences of the positive differentiation construction, based on internal competitiveness demands.

When referring to the ways organizations deal with their workers, usually, Human Resource Management (HRM) or Organizational Behavior (OB) issues are being discussed. The purpose of the study, however, is different. We intent to show that the way organizations deal with their workers is beyond HRM or OB discussions. Alternative paths to promote the internal organizations' competitiveness exist, notably, the ones related with organizational internal communication (Smith, 2008). We will show how and why Internal Communication (IC) is important for promoting organizations' competitiveness based on its unique approach regarding organizations' internal publics. Consequently, we will show why dealing with workers should not be exclusive of HRM or OB remits, and will support argumentation promoting the benefits of articulation of HRM, OB, and IC on internal competitiveness.

2 Organizational competitiveness and internal communication

Over the years, numerous scientific disciplines have dedicated to build scientific knowledge concerning the strategic management of organizations. As research that investigates these subjects does not fit into a sole area or discipline, the diversification of scientific areas concerning strategic management issues is wide (eg.: Human Resource Management; Public Relations). Despite scattered across diversified fields, significant amount of knowledge has been produced regarding the paths for promoting organizational competitiveness. For instance, human resource management have called for the importance of the effectiveness in applicants' attraction to organizations in recruitment (eg.: Barber, 1998; Carless, 2005; Gomes & Neves, 2010), as well as the relevance of learning evaluation in training (Barbier & Lesne, 1986; De Ketele, Chastrette, Cros, Mettelin & Thomas, 1994) or the diversified performance appraisal systems approaches' discussions (Morhman, Resnick-West & Lawler, 1989; Caetano, 2008). Following similar line of reasoning, Public Relations have been calling for the importance of the strategic management of communication for organizational image development purposes (Caillouet & Watkins, 1996; Wan & Schell, 2007), as well as the relevance of crisis response (Herrero & Pratt, 1996; Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2001).

These approaches for promoting organizational competitiveness have a common bond among them: they all assume that current organizational dynamics pressure organizations to know how to deal with the complexity and the challenges that characterize the harsh global markets' environments where they are embedded (Ulrich, 1998). A way of promoting competitiveness is to look at the organizations' resources and to manage them with a strategic sense. This is the main premise of the RBV¹ (Resource Based View) (Barney, 1991) of the firm frame. The Barney's RBV is an economic theory holding that organizations can earn sustainable returns if they have superior resources that are protected by mechanisms preventing their diffusion throughout industry. It strongly suggests that it's the resources that a firm has that allow sustaining competitive advantages. There is no doubt that the human resources were reasoned as a target of attention by management, viewing them as a strategic pathway of response to promote competitiveness (Rose & Kumar, 2006). Accordingly, this line of reasoning has had numerous supporters, who collected and proved based on empirical data, a link between human resources and organizational performance (eg.: Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrel-Cook & Fink, 1999; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001).

The current state of awareness regarding the role of the human assets for organizational growth and development is very clear and widely accepted by

academics and managers (eg.: Luthans & Sommer, 2005; Orlitzky, 2007). These conclusions are outcomes of several decades of research and practical awareness, which were grounded on dissimilar (yet complementary), fields of research, notably, Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Behaviour (OB) (eg.: Colquitt, Conlon, Porter & Ng, 2001; Vieswesvaran & Ones, 2002; Martin-Alcázar, Romero-Fernandez & Sanchez-Gardey, 2008). These specific fields of research have jointly contributed for the building of theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the role of the human factor on organizations. As such, several kinds of debates have been developed under the human factor remit, notably, regarding the importance of specific HRM practices: recruitment (eg.: Posthuma, Morgeson & Campion, 2002; Gomes & Neves, 2010); performance appraisal (eg.: Klimoski & Inks, 1990; Caetano, 2008); training (...); and organizational behaviour prediction and rationalization: organizational commitment (eg.: Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003); organizational justice (eg.: Folger & Konovsky, 1989); person-environment fit issues (Kristoff-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

Surprisingly, when compared to other issues in discussion, neither HRM nor OB literature have build fluent debate concerning the importance of Internal Communication (IC) for promoting organizational competitiveness. As IC deals with the human assets of the organization (the internal publics), it would be expected to have collected, over the years, wide attention of both HRM and OB' researchers. On the reverse, this seems to be, almost, an exclusive thematic of the organizational communication field of research with large association with Public Relations, as IC deals with the organizations' internal publics (eg.: Kunsch, 2003).

Internal Communication is clearly a strategic side of organizational communication, bringing important competitive contributes for organizations (D'Almeida & Libart, 2000). It involves all communication acts and strategies that are produced inside an organization (Westphalen, 1998), and as such, IC's characteristics differ for organization to another, as IC is highly dependant on the reality of the organization where it is being applied. This specific side of organizational communication deals with the type of information that is directed towards the internal publics of an organization, based on a sequence of strategic "communication processes through which an organization creates, manages and develops itself" (Almeida, 2003, p.24). As such, IC brings remarkable competitive contributes for organizations, based on the building and on the sharing of comprehension regarding the reality of organizations (Kunsch, 2003). This is definitely connected with the building of organizational competitiveness based on internal publics of an organization. It is highly connected with the building of the organizational culture, organizational image (eg.: Brault, 1992) and cohesion (Thévenet, 1997), for instance.

These contributes-premises were recognized through the last few decades, as several authors have cumulatively established that IC offers unique inputs to organizations (eg.: Thévenet, 1997; Westphalen, 1998). The main idea of these authors was to promote the awareness that IC delivers a set of exclusive contributes that, when properly managed and applied, help to promote organizational competitiveness. For instance, according to Myers and Myers (1982), IC has three primary functions: (1) production activities' coordination and regulation; (2) socialization and newly-hired workers' integration; (3) innovation supporter. Further on, Brault (1992) mentions that IC has seven main functions that offer precious inputs for competitive organizations: (1) informative; (2) integrative; (3) retroactive; (4) signalling; (5) behavioural; (6) organizational change promoter; (7) image management. Westphalen (1998) states that IC has three main global functions attached to itself: (1) information exposition and presentation; (2) information transmission; (3) to explain and to include the workers in the organization's reality and purposes. Globally, these functions imply that IC has the characteristic of contributing for a wide array of activities that happen in an organization, having strong strategic impact on its functioning.

However, and important to mention at this point, is that, these functions do not exist by simply existing IC in organizations. IC has to be properly managed in order to achieve all these contributes to promote competitiveness. An important concern when IC is being applied in organizations relates with the content of the communication that is directed towards the organizations' internal publics, as it must be strategically prepared and reasoned. As such, IC should not be developed isolatedly, that is to say, IC should be aligned with a two-way strategic reference pillar: (1) the organizational communication policy; (2) the organizational global development policy. This two-way reference helps to ground the strategic designing of the IC in any given organization, and supports the fulfilment of the functions and contributes commonly attributed to IC.

In what concerns to the organizational communication policy, it deals with all strategic communication designing and activities that are developed by organizations. The organizational communication policy (OCP) should have the quality of programming integrated strategic organizational communication. This means that IC must be integrated in this OCP, as when this does not happen, it will result in incoherent communication that will have severe internal and external implications. Disregarding the integration demand should result in strict efficiency, image and reputation problems (Van Riel, 1995, Van Riel & Frombrun, 2007). This integration demand has been widely requested by several researchers, whom have claimed for the need of organizations to have a broad, and yet, integrated

communication (eg.: Van Riel, 1995, Van Riel, 1995; Kunsch, 2003, 2007; Argenti *et al.*, 2005; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). This means that all communication goals of an organization must be strategically aligned with the identity of the organization and to be reasoned considering the diversity of audiences who will receive that very same communication (Kapferer, 1994; Van Riel, 1995, Argenti *et al.*, 2005).

Regarding this integration demand, and especially by considering the importance of IC on the OCP, Kunsch's (2003) Integrated Communication Model (ICM) should be highlighted, as it presents a very interesting framework in order to understand the content and the extension of organizational communication, as well as its relation to organizational competitiveness issues. The model proposes an organizational communication compound which integrates four main communication components: (1) Administrative Communication - referring to the type of communication that is processed within the organization in the remit of the administrative functions, and makes viable the entire organizational system with its fluxes and networks (Kunsch, 2003, p. 152). The organizational structure, the coherence between identity, mission, the values, vision and the image are widely assured here; (2) Internal Communication – refers to the amount of communication efforts that are directed towards the internal publics of the organization; (3) Market communication – has the remit of producing messages regarding the marketing purposes of the organization. As such, this area integrates a wide range of techniques that aim to attain the organizations' product promotion and services; (4) Institutional communication – is directed towards the corporate image and identity building through strategic public relations management. As such, it intends to establish long-lasting goodwill and trustworthiness relations among all who relate with the organization. It has the main focus of promoting the organization's image, based upon the mission, the vision, and the values.

The organizational global development policy deals with all the strategic guidelines for organizational development purposes. It assures the maximum effectiveness of the organization based on thorough analysis of the organization's evolving environment, searching for opportunities and ways of gaining leverage regarding main competitors. It is based on this policy that every organizational management sub-system (eg.: financial; marketing; human resource management) acquires a main guideline input. The organizational development policy provides strong strategic and action inputs for IC. It offers guidance regarding the fundamentals of the mission and the vision of the organization, and as such, allows for the building of the IC's mission and vision, which is relevant for the IC's development in organizations. In addition, the participation in the designing of these organizational inputs is critical and materializes an important step for the

pronouncement of the IC's strategic status in organizations. Furthermore, IC is also embedded in the values the organization has to develop. These are critical inputs for organizations, and relate with the components of the organizational culture. The IC' strategic alignment with the organizational development policy leads to important contributes for the management and development of the organization and allows for the fulfilment of its functions on organizations.

For these reasons, IC is beyond the simple actions that an organization performs with the purpose of informing its internal publics. It has a strong strategic focus and should be embedded and aligned with, but has relative independence regarding this 2-way reference pillar. Nevertheless, the strategic sense of IC is not limited to this 2-way alignment. This strategic importance also happens in practice, as IC is rich on own tools and actions, in order to assure that the functions and contributes of IC are materialized in organizations. Regarding its range of action, IC is primarily concerned with the organization's discourse about itself. For this reason, IC puts in practice an exercise of self-communication, while having the purpose of creating impact in the structure of the organization (Henriet & Boneu, 1990). By doing so, the IC reveals the organizational model in which is embedded with, and makes the organizational system viable, by permitting its development and survival (Kunsch, 2003).

By having the attributes described above, IC enhances the circulation of pertinent information regarding the workers of the organizations, and as such, has different kinds of ranges (Henriet & Boneu, 1990). It can have an operational sense when it intends to support leadership purposes in organizations by creating communication top-down fluxes, as well as stimulating bottom-up communication fluxes whenever its organizational culture permits so. IC can also have a motivational sense as it has clear concerns in transmitting communication contents affecting commitment and the organizational dynamic. It also makes possible for the growing of informality in organizations which naturally co-habits with the formal communication.

An issue that should be recalled and highlighted here, is that the current organizational dynamics have build a positive demand for employees empowerment (Crozier, 1994; Peters & Waterman, 1995), pressuring organizations to renew their practices of employees' inclusion in the organization's management and development systems, and to promote the workers' active citizenship behaviors within the organizations (Srouf, 2000, 43). This is also an important reason for the pronouncement of this strategic sense consistently attributed to IC (Freeman, 1991; Friedman, 2006). Having this set of information in mind, IC has the core responsibility of managing the search and the offer of communication within the

organization (d'Almeida & Libaert, 2000) and to promote the integration of the human resources in the organization's development purposes (Mercier, 1999).

This is mostly performed with the concern of producing IC in organizations with a double-reference: the act of positioning the individual in the collective; the collective act of permitting the articulation and the integration of the individuals within the organization (Henriet & Boneu, 1990). In order to make this possible, Henriet and Boneu (1990) describe four IC axis that systematize this double IC dynamic in all its range: (1) Comprehension axis – communication directed towards the understanding of the organization and for the individual to understand itself within the organization; (2) Circulation axis – by facilitating the circulation of information in the organization and with it, the articulation of the organization; (3) Confrontation axis – promotes the individual contribution and the informed participation within the organization; (4) Cohesion axis – promotes the cohesion within the workers, and stimulating higher identification with the organization. This four C's matrix places strong emphasis in understanding the organization has a network of information, which is a subject of systematic pressures underlying the individual-organization relation (Thévenet, 1997). The joint articulation of the axis makes the functions and the IC purposes visible in organizations (Déturie & Broyez, 2001), and allow: organization's global development orientation; positive image development; organizational culture strengthening; stimulates the dialog between workers and organization (Thévenet, 1997). For these reasons, IC does never self-exist in organizations, as it should be properly prepared, stimulated and re-invented along the demandings the organization faces in all its existence (Smith & Mounter, 2005).

3 Internal communication and the individual-organization relation's quality

As mentioned earlier, over the last century, numerous researchers have built fluent and significant knowledge over diversified subjects regarding the strategic management of organizations. The plethora of scientific areas concerning the strategic management issues is quite obvious, notably the ones concerned with the organizational competitiveness issue (e.g. organizational psychology; industrial management; marketing management; sociology; organizational communication).

A critical balance of existing research, namely the ones referring to the human aspect of organizations, reveals that the human factor is a critical element that contributes for organizational competitiveness (e.g. Baron & Armstrong, 2007). The actuality of this conclusion regarding the management of organizations' current

paradigm is quite obvious and is widely shared both by academics and managers. Empirically, the human factor importance issue was grounded on two main articulated fields of research: (1) human resource management; (2) organizational behaviour.

As for the first one (human resource management), it has been mostly dedicated to understand in what way the human resource management practices bring added-competitiveness to organizations, as well as on understanding how to manage and develop the human side of organizations. This has been a serious concern of this abundant field of research, notably, since the early days of personnel management to the current days of strategic human resource management. It is possible to outline major research traditions (which include personnel management issues and strategic human resources issues) that have cumulatively and consistently called for the human factor importance on organizations. Based on Bach and Sisson's (2000) frame, for instance, on the personnel management side it is possible to outline the Prescriptive, the Labor Process and the Industrial Relations traditions, each with specific research characteristics and contributes for the current strategic relevance of the human factor in organizations. Based on Boxall, *et al.*'s (2007) frame, on the strategic human resource management side, it is also possible to identify three main research traditions, each with specific characteristics and contributes for the pronouncement of the human aspect importance for organizations: the Micro HRM; Strategic HRM; International HRM.

Interesting to see is that the organizational behavior literature is clearly embedded with these research traditions, both when the human resources were seen and managed following personnel management or strategic human resource management guidance. A possible cut point here may be established if considered the level of analysis used by researchers. The trend is that the human resource management researchers have a clear tendency of researching using the organizational level of analysis, and the organizational behavior ones, using the individual level of analysis. Having this cut point in perspective, it is possible to outline several critical discussions regarding the importance of several variables that assure the individual-organization relation's quality. For instance, affective organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), organizational justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Porter, & Ng (2001), the relevance of the fit (Kristoff-Brown, 2000), workers' motivation or workers' satisfaction (Campion, 1988) are all critical indicators that are almost exclusive of OB remits of research. As such, and surprisingly, it is unknown if and in what way IC predicts these kinds of elements, and, consequently, if IC has a significant contribute for the improvement of the individual-organizational relation quality. The only evidences that point for the IC contribution for organizations are strongly based on

an organizational level of analysis, and following the organizational communication literature. That said, the benefits of IC on workers behavior and attitudes are, at least, unclear, as we can only assume positive and significant relations.

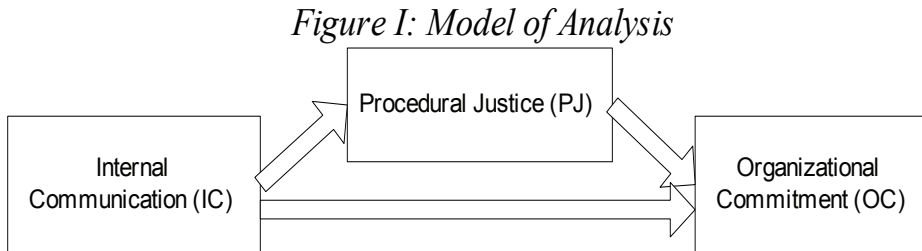
4 Hypotheses and model of Analysis

As mentioned, the quality of the individual-organization's relation has been a clear focus of research mostly stimulated by human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior (OB) researchers. This fact has lead to a clear research opportunity, based on the idea of understanding if IC has in fact predictive abilities over some main individual-organization relation' variables that are consistently pointed has being critical by HRM and OB researchers.

Accordingly, the main goal of our research is to understand the predictive abilities of IC over two critical elements that assure the individual-organization relation: affective organizational commitment and organizational justice. In addition, we intent to clarify whether IC predicts a process leading to organizational commitment and to clarify how organizational justice intervenes in this process. Having this last issue in mind, we are invited to think that IC should be related with organizational justice, namely, procedural justice, as IC has in its nature set of functions and activities that have the ability to include the workers in the organization (Thévenet, 1997; Henriet & Boneu, 1990). Supporting this argument, we also know that workers who are best included in the organization usually reveal higher procedural justice levels, as it may represent a form of indirect control over organizations' decision making processes (Thibault & Walker, 1975; Caetano & Vala, 1999). Lastly, we may also assume that IC may lead to commitment, as when the workers feel included in the organization and aware of its activities, the likeliness of having committed employees is high. Following this rationale, our first hypothesis is: IC is positively and significantly associated with organizational procedural justice and affective organizational commitment.

In addition, having an exploratory aim in mind, we suggest that IC may have the ability of predicting a process leading to organizational commitment, which is mediated by organizational procedural justice. We propose that IC has the ability of including the workers in organizations, and as such, will lead to procedural justice perception. This process will result in committed employees. Following this rationale, our second hypothesis is: Organizational procedural justice mediates the relation between IC and Organizational Commitment.

Figure I presents our simplified model of analysis.



5 Method

5.1 Sample and Procedure

A total of 153 workers of an organization of the business industry voluntarily participated in this study. In terms of the sample's characteristics, it had predominantly male participants (55%), and integrated all the work areas of the organization (5 main work areas). Education degrees varied from basic instruction (30%), mandatory graduation (50,7%) to higher education and master degree (19,3%).

Regarding the procedure, the participants responded to a questionnaire that contained the measures of the study. The instructions informed that they were participating in a study that was designed to understand how they evaluate their organization. Several procedural cautions were taken into consideration for minimizing and controlling the impact of potential systematic errors. In order to do so, we have followed Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee and Podsakoff's (2003) recommendations. Accordingly, our concerns were focused on controlling errors derived from: (1) items characteristics (item adaptation; we have assured the equidistance between all points of the scales); (2) context of the items (we've had instrument dimension optimization concerns in order to exclusively accomplish the study purposes; combinations of items of different constructs in the same sections of the questionnaire).

5.2 Measures

Internal Communication perception. Three items were built for accessing this variable. Sample item includes: "The information circulates well in this organization". The items were measured using seven point likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree)

to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Affective organizational commitment. Five items were taken from Meyer and Allen (1997), and Caetano and Vala (1999) were used to build this measure. Sample item includes: “I feel myself affectively bonded to this organization”. Items were measured using a seven point likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Procedural Justice perception. Six items were taken from Caetano e Vala (1999). Sample item includes: “It is allowed for the workers to participate in work-related decision making processes”. All items were measured using a seven point likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

6 Results

We have performed the Harman test in order to assure that the collected data do not account for a significative amount of common method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Subsequently, we have also performed an exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation, including all the items of the variables of the model of analysis. With this procedure, we have assured the dimensionality of the questionnaire and to guarantee that each variable constitutes an independent construct for this sample. All severe outliers were previously deleted.

Table I: Factor analysis of the variables included in the study (varimax rotation)

	Factorial Weights		
	1	2	3
<i>Procedural Justice Perception</i>			
Usually, the leadership assures that the workers' concerns are listened before making work-related decisions	,859	,279	,082
The leadership usually searches for adequate information before making work-related decisions	,836	,121	,282
The leadership clarifies the remit of work-related decisions	,825	,105	,194
The leadership is concerned in giving information to the workers whenever the workers ask for it	,793	,025	,303
The way how the leaders make work-related decisions is fair	,733	,170	,370
It is allowed for the workers to participate in work-related decision making processes	,705	,187	,096
<i>Affective Organizational Commitment</i>			
I feel myself affectively bonded to this organization	,113	,817	,133
I feel I belong to this organization	-,015	,758	,188
Even if I was offered a better pay job, I would maintain in this organization	,129	,752	,015
I am proud of working for this organization	,295	,736	-,084
This organization has great personal meaning for me	,203	,721	,266
<i>Internal Communication</i>			
The workers comprehend in what the organization is involved with as the information that exists in the organization is accessible	,161	,115	,806
The workers are aware of what is going on in the organization as the information that comes from the leaders is accessible	,326	,030	,718
The information circulates well in this organization	,308	,260	,653

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

KMO: 887

Table I shows the results of the EFA performed, with all items loaded, which resulted in a three factor structure. This has corresponded to the study variables, and accounted for 68% of the common variance. We have built the composite variables based on the EFA results. We have based on the factorial weights in order to do so (items with factorial weights above .40 (meaning that the items are relevant for interpreting the factor in reference (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998) were admitted in the corresponding factor).

Table II shows the means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for all variables. The scales reliability were all good. It is possible to verify that internal communication is positively and meaningfully correlated with affective organizational commitment ($r = ,35$), as well as with procedural justice ($r = ,61$). As expected, this evidence provides support for the study's first hypothesis.

Table II – Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	Means	Standard Deviation	1	2	3
1. Procedural Organizational Justice	4,1	1,33	(.87)		
2. Affective Organizational Commitment	5,2	1,27	.40	(.82)	
3. Internal Communication	4,0	1,29	.61	.35	(.74)

All variables intercorrelated at $p \leq .01$

7 points Likert scales;

Cronbach Alpha reported in parentheses

In order to test the mediation hypothesis proposed in this study, we followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) linear regression method². According to their guidance, there is a set of three conditions to assure the existence of a mediation effect: (1) the predictor variable should affect the mediator variable in the first regression equation; (2) the predictor variable should be affected by the dependent variable in the second equation; (3) the mediator variable should affect the dependent variable in the third regression equation.

Following these steps, we've verified that internal communication and organizational procedural justice (step one) were positively related ($\beta = .608$; $p < .01$) (Table III).

Table III– Regression of the mediator on the predictor

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tol.	VIF
Internal Communication	,624	,067	,608	9,342	,000	,608	,608	,608	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: Procedural Justice

Then, we've verified that internal communication and affective organizational commitment (step two) have revealed positive and significant relation ($\beta = .349$; $p < .01$; $R^2 \text{ Adjust.} = .116$) (Table IV). When controlling procedural justice (table IV), the relation between internal communication and affective organizational commitment (step three), became non-significant ($\beta = .167$; $p > .05$), and the effect of procedural justice in affective organizational commitment was positive and significant ($\beta = .299$; $p < .01$; $R^2 \text{ Adjust.} = .168$), revealing a full mediation of procedural justice in this relation.

Table IV– Regression of the predictor variable on the criteria, controlling the mediator

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tol.	VIF
1 Internal Communication	,343	,075	,349	4,553	,000	,349	,349	,349	1,000	1,000
2 Internal Communication	,164	,092	,167	1,785	,076	,349	,145	,133	,631	1,586
Procedural Justice	,286	,090	,299	3,192	,002	,401	,254	,238	,631	1,586

Dependent Variable: Affective Organizational Commitment

These results mean that IC stimulates procedural justice perceptions, and this will lead to organizational commitment. It seems that IC has the ability of including the workers in the organization. With this perceived inclusion, the workers perceive procedural justice, has they have the feeling of belonging and participating in the organization. This explains an affective bond with the organization. This result is consistent with some researchers' assumptions, stating that procedural justice may be explained by the quality of the feeling of inclusion that is provided by an organization and the relation with indirect control over the organizations' procedures (eg.: Thibault & Walker, 1975; Caetano & Vala, 1999). The workers usually feel procedural justice if they have the perception of being part of the organization and anticipate the ability of influencing the very same organization. This will result in committed employees.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

The importance of IC for organizations is well-addressed by organizational communication researchers and theory. The consensus is that IC is a nuclear component of the organizational communication global policy, and that it is important to conceive strategic IC practices, in order to stimulate organizational competitiveness. Clearly, over the years, several academics from the organizational communication area of research have associated IC with a wide array of functions for organizations (eg.: Thévenet, 1997; Henriët & Boneu, 1990). In thesis, these functions should stimulate and contribute for organizational competitiveness. Despite this apparent consensus surrounding the IC importance for organizational competitiveness issues, one comes to question in what way the virtues that have been congruently associated with IC influence the workers' attitudes and behavior. This is an apparent blank in existing research, as researchers that have examined

the predictors, processes or contexts that influence organizational behavior have clearly left out the IC issues in this matter (eg.: Colquitt, *et. all*, 2001; Campion, 1988; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003).

Following our analysis, we can point out two possibilities to explain this. First of all, the remit of research that is balanced to the analysis of the individual-organization relation has been stimulated and developed by Organizational Behavior (OB) or Human Resource Management' (HRM) researchers, not quite by organizational communication ones. Secondly, because organizational communication researchers usually follow an organizational level of analysis, and OB and HRM' researchers the individual one. As such, the existing knowledge regarding the individual-organization relation may have interesting benefits with the building of bridges between OB, HRM and Organizational Communication researchers in this matter. This has represented a clear research opportunity for us, as it is very pertinent to have an organizational communication perspective using an individual level of analysis regarding IC. The gains of combining different research remits regarding a common issue of concern can surreally be materialized in benefits for organizations. Bringing our reasoning and evidences collected all together, we believe that this study has theoretical, empirical and practical contributes that should be highlighted.

Has mentioned earlier, and according to our theoretical discussions, IC must not be structured isolatedly in order to have a strategic sense. IC should have a two-way strategic reference pillar: (1) the organizational communication policy; (2) the organizational global development policy. However, as IC deals with the internal publics of an organization, we have come to question the gains of a widening IC's reference pillars, notably, by proposing an approach to HRM development policy. This means that we have come to realize that an articulation between IC and HRM could easily be built, meaning that IC could work in organizations having a three-way reference pillar: (1) the organizational communication policy; (2) the organizational global development policy; (3) the human resource management policy. We say this based on our empirical evidences showing the effects of IC on workers' attitudes, which may very well contribute to stimulate a debate surrounding the issue of the articulation between IC and HRM. Noticing that both IC and HRM deal with the human assets of organizations it is quite possible to anticipate gains of an articulation that surely stimulate the building of inclusive theoretical models, which should be able to anticipate these gains.

Empirically, we have made an effort in understanding in what way may IC be related with important variables that assure the quality of the individual-organization (IO) relation. We have presented rationale supporting the importance

of organizational procedural justice and organizational affective commitment as two representative variables of this IO relation. We then presented evidences regarding the way IC may activate a process explaining organizational affective commitment. We have showed that IC leads to organizational procedural justice perception and lastly, to organizational affective commitment. With these results, we hope to have provided a stimuli regarding following researchers whom may have interest in assuming subsequent research challenges of understanding the consequents of IC on workers attitudes and behaviours.

As for the practical contributes, it is important to state that the idea of articulating HRM and IC does not imply any kind of overlap between them, as both have different practices that call for the use of different instruments when dealing with the workers. This simple idea is clearly consistent with current trends of organizational work arrangements that continuously mention the importance of diversity and interdisciplinary teams in organizations (eg.: Passos, 2002). Taking this into account, we think that the articulation between these practices may bring positive contributes when dealing with the workers, as it will surely stimulate diversity practices for human resources. We also believe to be important for organizations to make efforts of using the strategic IC axis reference when communicating HRM results and events, that is to say, organizations may have gains when communicating HR results with a strategic IC axis alignment. For instance, this communication may take place regarding simple issues as: promotions; performance appraisal results; internal publications; satisfaction and motivation monitoring results.

Like all studies, our study has limitations. The conclusions of this study should be read with conditionings. We highlight two main ones: (1) it is important to make clear that despite all procedures to minimize and control potential systematic common method errors. Additionally, (2) it is also important to say that along with our study, we have present several ideas that may encourage assuming causality. Important to clarify is that the model is recursive as it was theoretically driven. As such, further studies are surely welcomed in order to better acknowledge the stability of these results, for instance, using samples with different characteristics.

Bibliography

- Allen, D., Shore, L., & Griffeth, R. (2003). The role of perceived organizational support and supportive human resource practices in the turnover process. *Journal of Management*, 29, 99-118.
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of*

Occupational Psychology, 63, 1-18.

Almeida, V. (2003). *A comunicação interna na empresa*. Lisboa: Áreas Editora.

Argenti A. P., Howel, R. A., & Beck, K. (2005). The strategic communication imperative. *Mit Sloan Management Review*. Spring, 83-89.

Barber, A. (1998). *Recruiting employees: individual and organizational perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Barbier, J., & Lesne, M., (1986). *L'analyse des besoins en formation*. Auxerre: Sciences Humaines.

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 1, 99-120.

Baron, R., & Kenny, D. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Consideration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23, 177-180.

Brault, L. (1992). *A comunicação da empresa para além do modelo publicitário*. Mem Martins: Edições Cetop.

Caetano, A., & Vala, J. (1999). Efeitos da justiça organizacional percebida sobre a satisfação no trabalho e as opções comportamentais. *Psicologia*, 13(1-2), 75-84.

Caetano, A. (2008). *Avaliação de desempenho: metáforas, conceitos e práticas*. Lisboa: editora RH.

Caillouet, R., & Watkins, A. (1996). Impression management strategies employees use when discussing their organization's public image. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8, 211 — 227.

Campion, M. A. (1988). Interdisciplinary approaches to job design: a constructive replication with extensions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73, 467-481.

Carless, S. (2005). Person-job fit versus person-organization fit as predictors of organizational attraction and job acceptance intentions: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 78, 411-429.

Colquitt, J., Conlon, D., Porter, M., & Ng, K. (2001). Justice at the Millenium: a Meta-Analytic Review of 25 Years of Organizational Justice Research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 425-445.

Coombs, T., & Holladay, S., (2001). An extended examination of the crisis situations: a fusion of the relational management and symbolic approaches. *Journal of*

Public Relations Research, 13, 321-340

- Crozier, M. (1994). *A empresa à escuta*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.
- D'Almeida N., & Libaert T. (2000). *La communication interne de l'entreprise*. Paris: Dunod.
- De Ketele, J., Chastrette, M., Cros, D., Mettelin, P., & Thomas, J. (1994). *Guia do formador*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.
- Détrie Ph., & Broyez C. (2001). *La communication interne au service du management*. Paris: Liaisons.
- Ferris, G. R., Hochwarter, W. A., Buckley, M. R., Harrell-Cook, G., & Frink, D. D. (1999). Human resource management: some new directions. *Journal of Management*, 25: 385-415.
- Folger, R., & Konovsky, M. (1989). Effects of procedural and distributive justice on reactions to pay raise decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32, 115 – 130.
- Freeman R.E., (Ed.)(1991). *Business ethics – the state of the art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, A., & Miles, S.(2006). *Stakeholders: theory and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gomes, D., & Neves, J. (2010). Applicants' prior experiences influence organizational attractiveness prediction? *Management Research*, 8, 203-220.
- Hair, J. E., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black W. C. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis*. (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Harris, L., & Ogbonna, E. (2001). Strategic human resource management, market orientation, and organizational performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 51, 157-166.
- Henriet B., & Boneu F. (1990). *Audit de la communication interne*. Paris: Les Editions de l'Organisation.
- Herrero, A., & Pratt, C. (1996) An integrated symmetrical model for crisis-communications management. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8 , 79 — 105.
- Hitt, L., Bierman, K., Shimizu, R., & Kochhar (2001). Direct and moderating effects of human capital on strategy and performance in professional service firms: a resource-based perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 13 - 28.
- Kapferer, J.N. (1994). *Marcas: capital da empresa*. Mem Martins: Edições Cetop.
- Klimoski, R., & Inks, L. (1990). Accountability in performance appraisal.

Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Process, 45, 194-208

- Kristoff-Brown, A. (2000). Perceived applicant fit: distinguishing between recruiters' perceptions of person-job and person-organization fit. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 643-671.
- Kristoff-Brown, A., Zimmerman, R., & Johnson, E., (2005). Consequences of individual fit at work: a meta-analysis of person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisory fit. *Personnel Psychology*, 58, 281-342
- Kunsch, M. K. (2003). *Planejamento de relações públicas na comunicação integrada* (4ª ed.). São Paulo: Summus Editorial.
- Kunsch, M. K. (2007). Comunicação na era digital: contextos, percursos e possibilidades. *Signo e Pensamiento*. 51, (26), Julho/Dez. Consultado em Novembro de 2009, http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=S0120-48232007000200005&script=sci_arttext
- Luthans, K., & Sommer, S. (2005). The impact of high performance work on industry-level outcomes. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 17, 327-345.
- Martin-Alcázar, F., Romero-Fernandez, P., & Sanchez-Gardey, G. (2008). Human resource management as a field of research. *British Journal of Management*, 19, 103-119.
- Mercier, S. (1999). *L'éthique dans les entreprises*. Paris: Ed. La Découverte.
- Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., & Axelrod, B. (2001). *The war for talent*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Morhman, A., Resnick-West, S., & Lawler, E. (1989). *Designing performance appraisal systems: aligning appraisal and organizational realities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Neves, J. (2002). Gestão de recursos humanos: evolução do problema em termos dos conceitos e das práticas. In A. Caetano & J. Vala (Org.), *Gestão de Recursos Humanos* (pp. 3-30). Lisboa: RH Editora.
- Orlitzky, M. (2007). Recruitment strateg. In P. Boxall, J. Purcell & P. Wright (Eds), *The Oxford handbook of human resource management* (pp. 273-299). Oxford: Oxford. University Press.
- Passos, A. (2002). Gestão e desenvolvimento da carreira profissional. In A. Caetano & J. Vala (orgs), *Gestão de recursos humanos – contextos, processos e técnicas* (pp. 422-441). Lisboa: Editora RH.
- Penrose E. (1959). *The theory of the growth of the firm*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peters, T., & Waterman, B. (1995). *Na senda da excelência*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote.

- Pickles, L., Bookbinder, S., & Watts, C. (1999). Building the HR value chain. *Employment Relations Today*, 25, 21-23.
- Podsakoff, P., MacKenzie, S., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 5, 879-903.
- Rose, R., & Kumar, N. (2006). The influence of organizational and human resource management strategies on performance. *Performance improvement*, 45, 18-24.
- Smith L., & Mounter P. (2005). *Effective internal communication*. London: Kogan Page.
- Smith, L., & Mounter P. (2008). *Effective internal communication* (2nd ed.). London: Kogan Page.
- Srour, Robert H. (2000). *Ética empresarial*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Campus.
- Thévenet, M. (1997). *Cultura de empresa – auditoria e mudança*. Lisboa: Monitor.
- Ulrich, D. (1998). A new mandate for human resources. *Harvard Business Review*, Jan. /Feb., 124-134.
- Van Riel, C. B. M. (1995). *Principles of corporate communication*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Van Riel, C. B. M., & Fombrun, J. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communications*. New York: Routledge.
- Vieswesvaran, C., & Ones, D. (2002). Examining the construct of organizational justice: a meta-analytic evaluation of retaliations with work attitudes and behaviours. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 38, 193-204.
- Wan, H., & Schell, R. (2007). Reassessing corporate image—an examination of how image bridges symbolic relationships with behavioral relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19, 25-45.
- Westphalen M.H. (1998). *A comunicação na empresa*. Porto: Rés.

Notes

- 1 Despite the origin of the RBV frame is generally attributed to Penrose (1959), it was Barney (1991) that made clear the four indicators of the potential of firm return to generate competitive advantage. As such, we will follow Barney's propositions for describing this frame.
- 2 All previous tests for validating the following regression model were fulfilled, notably: linearity of the study phenomenon; randomized residual variables with null expected value; inexistence of multicollinearity; homocedasticity; normal distribution of the

randomized variables; independency of the residual randomized variables.

Correspondence

Daniel Roque Gomes, Joana Fernandes e Rosa Maria Campos Sobreira

Departamento de Comunicação e Ciências Empresariais

Escola Superior de Educação

Praça Herois de Ultramar

3000-329 Coimbra

drmgomes@esec.pt; joanaf@esec.pt; rsobreira@esec.pt

