

LATERAL COMMUNICATION AND INTER-FUNCTIONAL COORDINATION: A STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT FOR ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTINATIONAL BANKS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT:

Increasing organisational effectiveness is one of the most important organisational goals for almost all organisations particularly in the Nigerian banking industry. The study examined the strategic alignment of lateral communication and inter-functional coordination of multinational banks in Lagos State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised management staff of the multinational banks in Lagos State. The sample size was 299 using census sampling. Primary data used for the study were gathered through the administration of well structured questionnaire. The data gathered were analysed using a simple linear regression. The result showed that lateral communication positively affects organisational effectiveness ($t= 8.632, p< 0.05$); Furthermore, showed that inter-functional coordination positively affects organisational effectiveness ($t= 9.987, p< 0.05$) thus, concluded that lateral communication and inter-functional coordination positively affect the dependent variable in Lagos State.

Keyword: Inter-functional Coordination, Lateral Communication, Organisational Effectiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's corporate world, effective internal communication is recognised as a crucial component of successful organisations, particularly in the banking industry, where competition is fierce and multiple divisions must collaborate to achieve better outcomes. Internal communication, such as departmental coordination, staff collaboration, and manager-employee collaboration, is critical in increasing organisational effectiveness. Given the foregoing, poor internal communication may have a detrimental impact on organisational performance (Anwar and Abdullah, 2021). Communication inside an organisation is such an important part of human performance that it is nearly hard to envision a workplace without it. Maintaining a workplace requires engagement and communication with managers and other employees. Being a competent communicator is seen as a crucial asset for interacting with others and having a successful career (Top & Ali, 2021). Internal communication is being prioritised, and organisations are investing in the role. Internal communication serves to increase corporate value by efficiently communicating with employees, becoming 'a significant asset to the organisation', and establishing a sense of belonging. Effective internal communication may eliminate ambiguity and rumours while also catalysing change, and the communicator's primary audience is internal. It also helps to strengthen internal relationships and raise awareness about environmental change (Verghese, 2017).

As a result, studies highlight numerous techniques for exploring new and enhanced opportunities for operating both on the market and internally. It is vital to understand the fields, activities, and processes that are connected inside a corporation, as well as those that are independent of one another.

Simultaneously, managers must be aware of all external elements that impact the firm from its surroundings, as well as all issues that the company influences. This knowledge can help firms develop effective strategies. These methods must respond to all information obtained from both the external and internal surroundings and quickly incorporate new changes into the decision-making process. Many researchers strive to identify and provide the best solutions for businesses, enabling them to flourish. Inter-functional cooperation is one of the most commonly used ways. Inter-functional coordination is of scientific interest in a variety of sectors, including marketing, management, logistics, informatics, and human resources, and it serves as an inspiration for businesspeople. Tay and Tay (2007) defined inter-functional coordination as the alignment of all processes and activities inside an organisation (Tomaskova, 2018). Working together will foster important official and informal interactions amongst staff. Individuals differ in terms of personality, perception, opinion, nature, and thinking. They will be unable to comprehend each other unless they communicate well (Gardi, 2020).

Sharing information inside an organisation is regarded as the easiest and most successful management strategy for employee engagement in the banking business (Prabhu, 2020). According to Jacqueline, Sebyala, and Micheal (2014), employee interaction is a primary and crucial effort in organisations since an organisation's longevity is dependent on successful communication among workers, and relationships grow as a result of effective communication. However, communication has been primarily delegated to the organisation's structure and authority, which have not been given strategic priority, resulting in the key channels of communication not being used effectively. Multinational banks should get special attention due to their high level of personnel diversity and severe competitiveness. Therefore, it is vital to focus on enhancing the internal communication and coordination system to reach a high level of organisational effectiveness. There has been little or no research on vertical communication connection with inter-functional coordination as a predictor of organisational effectiveness in the Nigerian banking industry. This created a gap that the current study aims to fill by focusing on international banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lateral Communication

Internal communications are becoming increasingly important in businesses. According to Argenti in Chmielecki (2015), as organisations grow more focused on keeping a happy workforce with shifting values and demographics, they have had to reconsider how they interact with employees. Othman and Abdullah (2016) defined internal communication as the process by which individuals communicate knowledge in order to reach a mutual understanding. Furthermore, Abdullah and Othman (2016) defined internal communication as social engagement via communications (Abdullah & Othman, 2021). Internal communication is viewed as a leadership function in many organisations. Lateral communication involves communication among persons who do not stand in hierarchical relation to one another. While recent trends to flatten organisations have enhanced the importance of lateral communications, one fairly limited study found rather high levels of satisfaction with lateral communication among human resource managers, but lateral communication across managers of dissimilar functional divisions was often cited as a major source of organisational dysfunction. However, as the value of teams grows, more emphasis

is being placed on communication among team members. Lateral communication among workers in various functional areas is also becoming a significant challenge as more emphasis is placed on enhancing production speed through simultaneous, rather than sequential, work processes. There is a larger emphasis on communication among distributed workers and geographically separated work groups doing comparable types of work in order to foster learning and the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learnt (Okuneye, Lasisi, Omoniyi, & Shodiya, 2014).

Inter-Functional Coordination

Business functional domains vary greatly in most organisations, including production, sales, finance, research and development, and human resources, to name a few. These functional units should not exist in isolation but rather collaborate with other units to achieve the desired results. The coordination of these elements strengthens a company's internal structure and boosts its competitiveness. As a result, the link or good communication between these functional units influences organisational performance and creates a competitive advantage (Bankole, Ogundipe, Ogundepo, & Oghogho, 2020). Without interdependence, there is nothing to coordinate (Beuselinck, Verhoest, & Bourckaert, 2007). Coordination is the interaction of functions, structures, and resources in an organisational setting (Viinamäki, 2004), which can occur at several levels or have distinct dimensions. An inter-functional approach requires that all departments in the firm work effectively together in all elements of business operations. When there is a coordinated maximisation of the firm's resources to improve performance in the eyes of the customer, this is referred to as inter-functional orientation (Boso & Cadogan, 2013). Market orientation understands that all departments, including workers, understand the importance of employees' attitudes towards internal and external consumers.

Coordinated resource integration is closely tied to the customer and competitor since it promotes customer experience across departments (Boso & Cadogan, 2013). As a result, there is a need to inter-functionally coordinate the activities connected with the day-to-day administration of the business to enable the firm to realise its full potential in terms of performance (Mubarak, 2019). He highlighted how inter-functional cooperation adds value to a company's customers and enables a speedy response to their desires and wishes. Shapiro, as described in Tomascova (2018), introduced a new definition of inter-functional coordination, referring to it as cross-functional coordination, which aids in the synchronisation of all processes and functions inside an organisation. Tay & Tay (2007) defined inter-functional coordination as the alignment of all processes and functions inside an organisation. The primary goal of inter-functional coordination is to support the coordination of all processes and activities in a firm while also allowing for the effective flow of information both within and outside of the organisation.

Inter-functional coordination refers to the coordinated use of firm resources to provide higher value for target consumers (Porter 1980; Narver & Slater, 1990). Inter-functional coordination is based on customer and competition information and refers to the business's coordinated efforts, which often involve more than one department, to provide greater value to buyers (Ogbonna and Ogwo, 2013). Inter-functional coordination is the collaboration of all departments and functional areas of a firm to use

customer and other market information to produce higher value for its customers. Front-line staff have a significant impact on an organisation's performance. These personnel serve as the organisation's representatives and may make a big contribution by actively engaging with the organisation's consumers. Customer satisfaction may be created via good interactions between staff and consumers. This connection is increasingly significant in the service business (Hussain, Ismail, & Akhtar, 2015). Diversity is a thing of the past, present, and future, and it is for this reason that strategic planning to maintain harmony has become a compulsion, because it is part of a coordinative framework that enriches and explores broader and profitable policies and activities for achieving better outcomes in various types of organisations (Lewis, 2006). According to studies, top placement in an organisation has a greater impact on coordination since it involves top management duties. Top management personnel in an organisation transfer power or assign tasks to lower-level employees to achieve collective or declared organisational goals (Osifi, 2013). Lower-level personnel are also important to the coordination system since without them, the network is incomplete. (Hossain and Wu, 2009). To summarise, both higher- and lower-level personnel are relevant to an organisation's goals in relative terms.

Organizational Effectiveness

The organisation's existence and long-term effectiveness are dependent on its capacity to develop effective relationships with its surroundings. Effectiveness entails constant improvement in the internal capabilities system in order to respond to ever-changing possibilities and dangers in many aspects of the environment. Organisational effectiveness is a measure of how well an organisation achieves the objectives that it seeks to accomplish. Organisational effectiveness is concerned with a number of key areas, including talent management, leadership development, organisational design and structure, measurement and scorecard design, change and transformation implementation, and the deployment of smart processes and technology to manage firms' human capital (Dalvi & Shelankar, 2018). Organisational effectiveness is concerned with examining and improving the alignment between key areas, eliminating trade-offs between reliability, speed, and quality in those areas, developing effective strategies in those core areas, and facilitating capability building, structure redesign, and process modification. Effectiveness is therefore a wide notion that considers a variety of elements at different levels. It assesses the extent to which several goals are achieved.

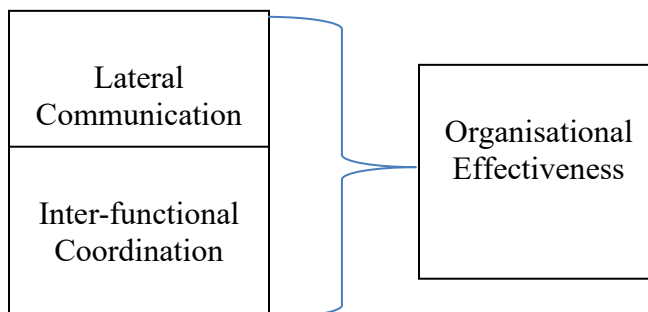
Organisational effectiveness is a view of an organisation's ability to fulfil its set goals. An efficient organisation is one in which all of its participants are happy. Such an institution is better positioned to convert inputs into outputs. Thus, effectiveness demonstrates an organisation's ability to use its resources. Organisational effectiveness refers to the capacity to gather and use resources efficiently in order to achieve the specified goals. Three levels of efficacy can be established. Individual effectiveness, at its most basic level, focuses on employee task performance. The job descriptions outline the many duties to be completed. Managers evaluate its efficacy via performance assessments (Dalvi & Shelankar, 2018). There are several ways to assess success, but a few criteria constantly appear in effectiveness measurements.

Certain elements influence organisational effectiveness. Clarity of goal, supporting policies, proper organisational design, working conditions, compensation and benefits, good supervisory practices, workforce loyalty, operational efficiency, and customer-orientated conduct were identified as essential markers of performance (Gilbert and Ali, 2000). There is a considerable association between organisational learning and organisational effectiveness. (Yang, 2007). According to Kushner and Poole, as described in Basol and Dogerlioglu (2014), an organisation's performance may be measured using four criteria: resource acquisition, efficiency, objective fulfilment, and customer satisfaction. Parhizgari and Gilbert (2004) assume that a domain containing effective factors can be defined, with constraints imposed by feasibility considerations for each company, industry, or sector, and that organisational effectiveness can be measured using the perspectives of employees and/or customers.

Multinational Banks

Some banks began to establish physical presences overseas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This international expansion was primarily motivated by colonisation. These banks supplied sophisticated banking services to economies that previously had no or a very basic financial industry. Banks have traditionally participated in foreign transactions. They have transacted in foreign currencies, supplied credit for overseas commerce, traded and retained foreign assets, and issued letters of credit to travellers. All of this, as well as several other sorts of business, has historically been carried out by banks from their home sites. There was no need for a physical presence overseas. Multinational, often known as transnational, banking is a relatively recent phenomenon. Its rise paralleled and intensified with technology advancements and cost reductions in international travel and communications throughout the postwar period. This sort of banking involves a bank's actual presence abroad. The most common and adaptable legal form of this presence is a branch, which uses the home-country bank's name and structure. It is often an autonomous business company with limited liability whose shares are held by the parent. Other legal structures used for overseas physical presence include agencies and representative offices, which have limited legal operational power but also limited liability. Subsidiaries are employed when ownership is shared with other businesses or persons, often inhabitants of the nation hosting the foreign bank. These subsidiaries are mostly companies with limited liability. In addition, banks have maintained correspondent bank networks to conduct business in regions where they do not have a physical presence.

Conceptual Framework



Relationship between Lateral Communication, Inter-functional Coordination and Effectiveness

Source: Author's Conceptualisation (2025)

Lateral communication is an important aspect of inter-functional cooperation. As a result, communication involves the sharing of information and is a critical component of successful coordination. The ultimate purpose of inter-functional coordination is to synchronise effort. However, both are critical factors of organisational efficiency, especially in a highly competitive and dynamic sector such as banking. In light of the foregoing, the putative relationship between lateral communication and inter-functional coordination would predict organisational efficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The principles of lateral communication and organisational performance have been founded on a variety of theories, including systems theory. In light of this, the systems approach provides a comprehensive perspective of an organisation. According to system theory, the organisation is a system made up of interconnected components. As a result, systems theory has a more legitimate and useful role in internal communication. This is because the systems approach acknowledges the importance of communication in promoting efficient working across the organisation's many components.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey research design. Data to be used for the study was collected through the circulation of carefully designed questionnaires to the respondents. The study population was derived from multinational bank staff in Lagos State. Seven multinational banks were employed. Therefore, the study population are (Access Bank 50, Zenith Bank, 144 UBA 30, GTCo 40, Eco Bank 19, Citibank 4, Standard Chartered Bank 12), bringing the study population to two hundred and ninety-nine (299) as revealed by each bank locator record in 2025. Only the management staff were employed and the entire population was employed using census sampling. Descriptive statistic including the use of a frequency table to analyse the demographic information. The data generated through the questionnaire was analysed with the use of multiple regression analysis for the stated objectives. It is noted that the T - statistic measure was used to test the hypotheses generated in this study. Therefore, the regression line is stated below:

$$Oef = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Lcm + \mu \dots \dots \dots (3.1)$$

Oef = Organisational Effectiveness

β_0 = Intercept

Lcm = Lateral Communication

μ = Stochastic or Error Term

$$Oef = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Ifc + \mu \dots \dots \dots (3.2)$$

Oef = Organisational Effectiveness

β_0 = Intercept

Ifc = Inter-Functional Coordination

μ = Stochastic or Error Term

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Description of Respondent

Two hundred and ninety-nine 299 questionnaires were administered while 268 questionnaires were filled and submitted for analysis which represents 89% of the total sampled respondents. Table 1 shows that 57.1% of the respondents are male while 42.9% of the respondents were female thus implied that the majority of the respondents were male. This implied that male occupied most of the management positions compared to female. Marital status distribution shows that 14.6% of the respondents were single, 82.8% of the respondents were married, while 2.6% of the respondents were divorced, thus implied that most of the respondents were married. Age distribution showed that 7.8% of the respondent falls below 35 years of age, 39.6% falls between 36-45 years of age while 52.6% of the respondents fall above 46 years of age thus implying that most respondents fall above 46 years of age. Academic Background showed that 60.4% of the respondents attended university while 39.6% of the respondents attended polytechnic thus implies that the majority of the respondents attended university. Finally, as shown on work experience distribution, 9% of the respondents fall below 5 years of experience, 23.5% of the respondent falls between 6-10 years of experience while 67.5% of the respondent falls above 10 years of experience thus implies that most respondents fall above 10 years of experience.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Sex Distribution		
Male	153	57.1
Female	115	42.9
Total	268	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	39	14.6
Married	222	82.8
Divorced	7	2.6
Total	268	100.0
Age Distribution		
Below 35Years	21	7.8
36-45Years	106	39.6
46Years Above	141	52.6
Total	268	100.0
Academic Background		
University	162	60.4
Polytechnic	106	39.6
Total	268	100.0
Work Experience		
Below 5 Years	24	9.0
6-10 Years	63	23.5
Above 10 Years	181	67.5
Total	268	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

Interpretation of Results

Lateral Communication and Organisation Effectiveness

Table 2 revealed that the regression coefficient between organisational effectiveness and the explanatory variable on lateral communication shows a positive figure of 0.707. This indicates that there is a very strong relationship between lateral communication and organisational effectiveness which implies that the explanatory variable has a positive effect on organisational effectiveness. The coefficient of multiple determinant (R^2) with a coefficient of 0.500 shows that the explanatory variable can explain 50% of the behaviour of organisational effectiveness while the remaining 50% can be explained by the stochastic variable or other variables that were not put into consideration. The adjusted R^2 further confirms the result of the R^2 with a coefficient of 0.482, which shows 48.2% explanation of the behaviour of the organisational effectiveness by the explanatory variables after adjustment while the remaining 51.8% is explained by the error term. Table 2 gives a summary of the regression result using SPSS 20.0 software. From the table it can be deduced that the value of the constant parameter is given as 2.514 and lateral communication is 0.749, respectively. The regression result above shows that organisational effectiveness is constant at 2.514; this implies that if the explanatory variable is held constant, organisational effectiveness will increase by 2.514%. The coefficient of lateral communication is given as 0.749, which shows that the lateral communication is positively related to organisational effectiveness and therefore implies that an increase in lateral communication will result in to 74.9% at 0.05 level of significance increases on organisational effectiveness. Therefore, the regression line is stated below:

$$\text{Organisational Effectiveness} = 2.514 + 0.749\text{Lcm}$$

Table 2: Lateral Communication Effect on Organisational Effectiveness

Variables	Beta	T-Statics	P-value
Constant	2.514	10.041	.000
Lateral Communication	.749	8.632	.000
R	.711*		
R^2	.506*		
R^2	.502*		
F*	27.687		

Source: Author's Field Survey, (2025)

Inter-functional Coordination and Organisational Effectiveness

Table 2 revealed that the regression coefficient between organisational effectiveness and the explanatory variable on inter-functional coordination shows a positive figure of 0.801. This indicates that there is a very strong relationship between inter-functional coordination and organisational effectiveness which implies that the explanatory variable has a positive effect on organisational effectiveness. The coefficient of multiple determinant (R^2) with a coefficient of 0.641 shows that the explanatory variable can explain 64.1% of the behaviour of organisational effectiveness while the remaining 35.9% can be explained by the stochastic variable or other variables that were not put into consideration. The adjusted R^2 further confirms the result of the R^2 with a coefficient of 0.637, which shows 63.7% explanation of the behaviour of the organisational effectiveness by the explanatory variables after adjustment while the remaining 36.3% is explained by the error term. Table 2 gives a summary of the regression result using

SPSS 20.0 software. From the table it can be deduced that the value of the constant parameter is given as 2.643 and inter-functional coordination is 0.602, respectively. The regression result above shows that organisational effectiveness is constant at 2.514; this implies that if the explanatory variable is held constant, organisational effectiveness will increase by 2.643%. The coefficient of inter-functional coordination is given as 0.602, which shows that the inter-functional coordination is positively related to organisational effectiveness and therefore implies that an increase in inter-functional coordination will result in to 60.2% at 0.05 level of significance increases on organisational effectiveness.

Therefore, the regression line is stated below:

$$\text{Organisational Effectiveness} = 2.643 + 0.602\text{Ifc}$$

Table 3: Inter-Functional Coordination Effect on Organisational Effectiveness

Variables	Beta	T-Statics	P-value
Constant	2.643	8.100	.000
Inter-Functional Coordination	.602	9.987	.000
R	.801*		
R ²	.641*		
R ²	.637*		
F*	34.067		

Source: Author's Field Survey, (2025)

Discussion of the Findings

Based on the study hypotheses. It is clearly visible from the research findings of the whole study that lateral communication measures were found positive on organisational effectiveness considering group work, team work, employee interaction and inter-functional unity which were significant on organisational effectiveness. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was accepted and rejected otherwise. In view of the above, the study findings is in accordance to the study of Okuneye, Lasisi, Omoniyi and Shodiya (2014) which was carried out on internal communication strategy and performance: evidence from Nigerian service and manufacturing industry. The study found that effective business communication is related to performance in the surveyed Nigerian companies.

Moreso, it was revealed that inter-functional coordination was found to be positive on organisational effectiveness considering resource sharing, customer value and market information which were significant on organisational effectiveness. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was accepted and rejected otherwise. In view of the above, the study finding is in accordance to the study of Tomascova (2018) who analysed the knowledge about inter-functional coordination and its influence on customer success in the Czech Republic using the Spearman's rank Correlation test. The results show that the implementation of inter-functional coordination in small and medium scale businesses has a positive relationship on the success of its customers. Also, Mubarak (2020) finding supported that inter-functional coordination, long-term focus and profitability, and that these have positive impacts on the market and financial performance of SMEs in Sri Lanka. It was also established that inter-functional coordination was statistically significant in explaining organization performance of insurance firms in Kenya as reported by Waruiru, Namusonge and Wanjira (2018).

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings, multinational banks in Nigeria have a competitive advantage over others due to periodic market surveys in place and good coordination of information across various divisions or departments in any company. The results of inferential statistics revealed that lateral communication and inter-functional coordination have a positive and significant influence on organisational effectiveness at the 0.05 level of significance. The alternate theory was accepted, but the other hypothesis was rejected. Thus, we conclude that lateral communication and inter-functional coordination have a significant impact on the effectiveness of multinational banks in Lagos State. As a result, the research proposes that lateral communication be fostered in order to strengthen staff-to-staff relationships and to allow employees to build professional teams capable of overcoming issues that transcend one profession. Employees should also be encouraged to use the abilities they learnt in lateral communication for upward communication.

Finally, it is advised that good coordination be implemented for resource utilisation and the establishment of a power basis for effective competition. Because the banking market is particularly competitive and volatile in Nigeria today, the functional divisions should be coordinated to achieve the company's goals and increase its competitiveness.

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