Application of the Levinisian Face-to-Face Dialogue among Local Government Units: Basis of Trendsetting Organizational Communication

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of organizational communication by tracing it from the perspective of Levinasian face-to-face dialogue in today's contemporary interpretation of management in general and organizations in particular. This paper made use of positivist and constructivist philosophical frameworks for research. The data were gathered using a questionnaire checklist. The data were described, measured, and tested to interpret the perception of the government employees in face-to-face dialogue.The results implied a weak application of face-to-face dialogue where face-to-face communication with superiors is not fully observed and there is a high degree of communication barriers. There were a few individuals who hoard information and benefitted from the information they were hoarding. Inter-departmental communication was not fully observed, and face-to-face dialogues were not being utilized to improve job performance and meet organizational goals and objectives. Information from colleagues was not always accurate and detailed. This paper has implications for organizational, leadership, and managerial as it imposes behavioral change by anchoring its concepts from the Levinisian perspective of face-to-face dialogue.

1. INTRODUCTION

Problems in an organization may not be the actual problems, but rather, they are just symptoms of a bigger problem.Conflicts and potential misunderstandings, for instance, can arise due to ineffective communication.Conflicts and misunderstandings without quarrels don't mean that the problem has gradually ceased and resolved. Still, these may eventually breed bigger problems until such time the entire organization would collapses.Face-to-face communication would then come into the grand entrance for resolving conflicts and misunderstandings as well as bringing positive change to an organization. The absence of face-to-face communication can potentially demotivate and demoralize employees.In this sense,face-to-face communication becomes imperative to rebuild trust, motivation, productivity, and morale among employees. Considering complexities in an organization, communication failures and misunderstandings can prevent the parties from commonly framing a problem and dealing with it collectively.The Levinisian perspective of face-to-face dialogue can be potentially helpful to individuals in an organi-

zation to have a higher level of consciousness, and it may encourage them to become more creative and effective. Face-to-face dialogue holds considerable promise as a problem-formulation and problem-solving philosophy.Face-to-face dialogue should also manifest in organizational communications to help each other understand each other's perspectives.Only from common understanding can change and resolution grow.

Face-to-face communication is very important in a company because it makes systems and transactions go more smoothly, which leads to organizational effectiveness. In today's managerial context, face-to-face conversation is still important, especially when people inside the business need to understand one another's points of view. To reduce misconceptions, disagreements, and tensions between groups and resolve issues, dialogue acts as a mechanism that builds bridges of understanding between them. Conversations help businesses understand the underlying reasons for problems. It appears to be a useful tool for laying the groundwork for understanding and creating rules for productive ongoing communication. The dialogue method can be quite helpful for workgroups with different functions and priorities that need to interact while knowing little about one another's daily activities. Similarly,, departments with some diversity but little interaction between people from various backgrounds might improve cooperation through discussion. Dialogue inside a company promotes better comprehension and more innovative teamwork among various individuals and organizations. By reducing misconceptions and tensions, this approach makes it possible for future interactions to be more fruitful. Among local government units (LGUs), face-to-face communication must be promoted. An organization that promotes good governance must become a model for organizational transformation. In this sense, the Levinisian perspective of face-to-face dialogue could be re-examined at the different levels of the organization, and it should be applied as a leadership framework. Face-to-face dialogue can be considered a philosophy to develop plans and solve organizational problems. Leaders may need to communicate in a manner where they are seen by their listeners, and in the same manner, they need to see their subordinates to understand their perspectives.There have been several studies on organizational communication, but there have been no studies conducted on connecting face-to-face dialogue.The Levinisian perspective of face-to-face dialogue provides a broader state of communication as well as the ethical side of communication.The Levinisian viewpoint can improve communicators' feelings of duty and behavior. However, there needs to be more research in the study of face-to-face discourse as a lens through which to examine corporate communication. To fill this gap, this study examines the consequences of Emmanuel Levinas' viewpoint on human communication. The idea of face-to-face dialogue, which invites people to focus on the ethics of their communication, was developed by eminent philosopher Levinas (1906–1955).

Levinas contends that communication is vital in helping people become more aware of their interpersonal interactions and their ethical obligations to others' varied and complex identities. According to Levinas, the face is a living thing that speaks for itself as an expressive medium. Additionally, he stressed how facial expressions and photographs go beyond simple visual representations to reveal vital details about people's feelings and sentiments (Totality and Infinity 66, 297).

The importance of face-to-face communication cannot be overstated. The combination of social emotions, comprehensibility demands, and social obligations make it different from other forms of connection and requires a responsive relationship with others. According to Levinas, interactions with inanimate objects differ significantly from face-to-face contact between humans when the other person's face commands an ethical relationship. The fundamental human interface is proximity-based communication between palpable bodies, which promotes mutual understanding. A universal connection is made, and a sense of community is fostered through language as it finds its place in the interaction with the other. Levinas emphasizes the value and dignity of the face as the ultimate embodiment of the other. A person's face can communicate a lot, even when words are not used. Levinas asserts that every discourse is initiated and made possible by the face, which

speaks for itself. "Thou shalt not kill," which is the first word expressed through the face, commands attention as though a master were speaking. The human face has an inherent "ought" that denotes a fundamental obligation that ought to pervade all interpersonal interactions. According to Levinas, when we look at another person's face, we are reminded of our fundamental moral obligations and purpose as human beings. When we interact with others, we become more sympathetic and caring. The face of the other also takes on a divine significance, serving as a portal to the concept of God. Even if we cannot directly experience God, we can feel his presence when we come face to face with another person. According to Levinas, the face is more than just a person's outward look. It includes the social and moral experience of another person's actual presence. The most exposed, weakest, and most expressive feature of the other is their face, which simultaneously invites and forbids potential aggression. "Thou shalt not kill," an emphatic command that has the effect of being given by a master, is the first term in this passage that speaks of conscience. The Other's face simultaneously embodies poverty and stands in for those who are in need, the underprivileged, and to whom we owe aid. This viewpoint can be used in the context of contemporary management, serving as a reminder that we shouldn't abuse or hurt others in our relationships with them. It draws attention to the need for us to behave in a way that respects and safeguards the welfare of others.

Organizational Communication. For businesses to match performance with goals, effective communication is essential. It gives leaders the ability to carry out their duties and is the basis for planning. Leaders must be effectively informed so they can then communicate implementation strategies. Additionally, efficient communication between leaders and subordinates is crucial for task organization and goal achievement. Written and spoken communication is a key component of organizational control. It is a crucial component of effective companies and consumes a large percentage of the time of leaders because it involves speaking with employees, coworkers, clients, and suppliers. By giving task clarity, performance feedback, and improvement direction,

communication fosters motivation. Offering information and evaluating potential actions aids in decision-making. Various forms of oral and written communication within a company, as well as organizational media, have been shown to affect employee attitudes. Additionally, communication is helpful for socializing and is important for human survival. Additionally, it aids in the management of organizational operations by directing behavior following hierarchical levels, principles, and directives. Management expertise in message delivery and reception is required for effective communication. Leaders must recognize barriers to effective communication, examine their origins, and take preventative action. The primary duty of a leader ultimately becomes creating and sustaining a successful communication system (Agarwal & Garg, 2012; Femi, 2014; Ince & Gül, 2011).

Face-to-face dialogue in organizational communication. Establishing strong face-to-face communication channels is important since effective communication is essential to every part of an organization. It is easier to build fruitful relationships when face-to-face communication is prioritized and maintained. Employees who feel at ease conversing face-to-face are more likely to collaborate successfully and offer creative suggestions. As a result, the organization is better able to implement its strategy and objectives fully. Additionally, encouraging face-to-face communication fosters team cohesiveness and increases overall effectiveness. Employee morale benefits from effective communication because employees feel knowledgeable about the direction and goal of the organization, which increases job security. Regular face-to-face interactions can help employees maintain a strong work ethic by serving as a reminder of their common aims and objectives (Farahbod, Salimi, and Dorostkar, 2013). Additionally, excellent face-to-face communication leaders may effectively instruct and remind their followers of their duties. Through dialogue, leaders can produce helpful criticism and learn more about the aspirations of their subordinates. Finally, frequent face-to-face conversations encourage openness between leaders and followers, giving firms built on trust a competitive advantage (Zeffane, Tipu, & Ryan, 2011; Linell, 2009; Levinas, 1985/1969).

2. METHOD

Both constructivist and positivist philosophical frameworks for research were combined in this study. While the constructivist perspective stresses that reality is socially produced, the positivist perspective emphasizes observable and quantifiable facts as the foundation for knowing. A questionnaire was created using ideas from trustworthy sources, and a descriptive survey method was used to collect the results. Validity and reliability tests were performed on the questionnaire. Government employees who agreed to participate and complete the questionnaire were the focus of the convenience sample investigation. The acquired data were manually tallied, and statistical analysis was performed on them. The weighted mean, rank, and standard deviation were utilized as analytical tools together with the 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the data. The rubrics used to interpret the data were as follows:

4.21 -	5.00	Always Observed (AO)	0.81 -	1.00	Very High Deviation (VHD)
3.41 -	4.20	Observed (O)	0.61 -	0.80	High Deviation (HD)
2.61 -	3.40	Sometimes Observed (SO)	0.41 -	0.60	Moderate Deviation (MD)
1.81 -	2.60	Rarely Observed (RO)	0.21 -	0.40	Low Deviation (LD)
1 -	1.80	Never Observed (NO)	0.01 -	0.20	Very Low Deviation (VLD)

Results

Level of face-to-face communication with superiors.

Table 1 presents the level of face-to-face communication with superiors as perceived by LGU employees.The overall result shows that face-to-face communication with superiors and face-to-face interdepartmental communication are not fully observed.The Table 1.The level of face-to-face communication with superiors also shows that communication barriers are sometimes observed, which may hinder effective face-to-face dialogues. However, face-to-face communication with colleagues within their respective departments is observed.The overall result presents that the level of face-to-face communication with superiors is 'sometimes observed,' having a Mean of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.27, indicating that there is a 'low deviation' on the responses. The result reveals that face-to-face communication with their superiors is not fully observed. The low deviation in the responses also presents low variability, indicating that they have common perceptions and similar experiences in communicating with their superiors. The result may manifest that the LGU employees receive information from their superiors, but it may not be through the use of face-to-face communication. For instance, superiors may primarily use written or media communication (e.g., memos, e-mail, etc.) when they deal with their subordinates. However, the result does not fully adhere to the face-to-face dialogue concept of Levinas, which is characterized by social emotion and that promotes ethical relations with other beings. The highest response is "I receive information as relayed by my superior or from top management," having a Mean of 3.95, numerically interpreted as 'observed.' The result presents that information coming from respondents' superiors or top management is being relayed to them and being received by them. However, as revealed by the lowest indicator, the superiors or the top management are using other means of communication to relay information. The lowest observed indicator is "my organization uses a face-to-face interaction when communicating information," having a Mean of 2.85, numerically interpreted as 'sometimes observed.' The result reveals that LGU employees perceive that they do not fully observe or practice face-to-face communication. The result may not affirm the concept of Levinas that communication involves face-to-face dialogue, which can be contextualized in the communication between the superior or top management and their subordinates. Further, it does not conform to what Farahbod, Salimi, and Dorostkar (2013) in which they stressed that face-to-face communication could improve work ethic and it would remind employees that they are working towards a common goal.

Level of Communication Barriers.

	INDICATOR	MEAN	Dec. Equiv.	Rank
1	I receive information as relayed by my superior or from top management	3.95	O	1
2	My superior or the top management holds "town hall" meetings to pass along information	3.00	SO	18
3	My superior or the top management organizes meetings to relay relevant information to my department	3.45	O	5.5
4	I receive from my superior or the top management information I need to perform my job effectively	3.40	SO	7.5
5	Most meetings I attend are informative and worthwhile	3.50	O	4
6	Most information passed down from top management is detailed and accurate.	3.05	SO	16.5
7	I feel comfortable passing along information that I receive from my superiors to my co-workers.	3.65	O	2
8	The directives that come from top management are clear and consistently reliable.	3.45	SO	5.5
9	I received the information I needed to perform my job on time.	3.40	O	7.5
10	My organization uses face-to-face interaction when communicating information	2.85	SO	20
11	The communication lines are "open" to my superior	3.15	SO	14
12	I am comfortable in a face-to-face conversation with my superior	3.55	O	3
13	I feel comfortable expressing my concerns with my superior	3.35	SO	10
14	My concerns are being responded to by my superior or top management	3.35	SO	10
15	I can easily talk about any matters with my superior or the top management	3.25	SO	13
16	I can express my emotions to my superior or the top management	2.90	SO	19
17	I can express complaints to my superior or the top management when I feel I am in the right position	3.05	SO	16.5
18	Non-verbal communication is being considered during a conversation	3.10	SO	15
19	I feel there is a mutual understanding when I communicate with my superior	3.30	SO	12
20	I feel comfortable giving feedback and questions to my superior	3.35	SO	10
Overall Mean		**3.30**	**SO**	
Standard Deviation		**0.27**	**LD**	

Table 1.
Level of face-to-face communication with superiors

INDICATOR		MEAN	Dec. Equiv.	RANK
	To share ideas/information, I need to go through layers of superiors or persons.	3.65	O	2
2	In most departments, there tend to be one or two people who hoard important information.	4.45	AO	1
3	Superiors often seem hesitant to communicate news about the organization to lower-level employees	2.95	SO	7
4	In this organization, there appear to be cliques of individuals who control the flow of important information	3.35	SO	5
5	Most of the information I receive daily is passed down through the "grapevine."	3.40	SO	4
6	There are too many "gatekeepers" in this organization that hinder the flow of important information.	3.60	O	3
7	My colleagues and I receive unreliable information from our superiors	2.35	RO	9
8	I am always the last to find out what is happening in this organization.	2.20	RO	10
9	The media used in passing information is appropriate.	2.65	SO	8
10	Face-to-face communication is often used in this organization.	3.00	SO	6
Overall Mean		**3.16**	**SO**	
Standard Deviation		**0.67**	**HD**	

Table 2.
Level of communication barriers

Table 2 presents the level of communication barriers as perceived by the LGU employees. The overall result presents that the level of communication barriers is 'sometimes observed', having a Mean of 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.67, indicating that there is a 'high deviation' in the responses. The result may manifest that the LGU employees perceive that communication barriers are sometimes observed, which may hinder effective communication. The standard deviation also presents varying responses, which indicates that they may have different perceptions in terms of the level of barriers in their respective organization. For instance, some of them may perceive that there is a high degree of communication barrier, or some of them may observe a low level of communication barrier. As observed, however, in the responses, most of the LGU employees have perceived a high degree of communication barriers. The result may hinder face-to-face communication, which may prevent the organization from interacting effectively with each other. The highest response is "in most departments, there tend to be one or two people that hoard important information," having a Mean of 4.45, numerically interpreted as 'almost observed'. The result reveals that some LGU employees hoard important information, and they tend to benefit from this information.The result may also manifest that information is not equally shared, and some are capable of hoarding information. The lowest observed indicator is "I am always the last to find out what is happening in this organization," having a Mean of 2.20, numerically interpreted as 'rarely observed.' The result reveals that the respondents have their means of knowing what is happening in their organization.Information can be immediately known by anyone, probably using their grapevines.

Level of face-to-face inter-departmental communication.
Table 3 presents the level of inter-departmental communication as perceived by government employees. The overall result presents that the level of face-to-face inter-departmental communication is 'sometimes observed', having a Mean of 2.97 with a standard deviation of 0.48, indi-

INDICATOR		MEAN	Dec. Equiv.	RANK
1	I can easily talk to co-employees in other departments	3.90	O	1
2	My department readily shares important information with other departments	3.45	O	2.5
3	Other departments readily share important information with my department	2.80	SO	5.5
4	The information that employees share in other departments is often biased and reflects their interests.	2.75	SO	7.5
5	Interdepartmental meetings are encouraged to share relevant information	2.85	SO	4
6	Most of the interdepartmental meetings I attend are useful for obtaining the information I need to do my job.	2.45	SO	9.5
7	There is comfortable, face-to-face communication with co-employees in other departments	3.45	O	2.5
8	There is a good communication flow between departments	2.80	SO	5.5
9	Communication with other departments encourages strengthening understanding of each other	2.75	SO	7.5
10	Interdepartmental communications are welcomed to meet goals and objectives	2. 45	SO	9.5
Overall Mean		**2.97**	**SO**	
Standard Deviation		**0.48**	**MD**	

Table 3.
Level of Face-to-Face Inter-departmental Communication

cating that there is a 'moderate deviation' in the responses. The standard deviation presents a moderate variability in the responses of the LGU employees, which means that most of them have similar perceptions of the level of inter-departmental communication. The result manifests that inter-departmental communication is not fully observed, and barriers to face-to-face dialogue may exist. This is supported by one interviewed department head stating that "there is a communication barrier between departments, and it can be observed during meetings that departments are clustered rather than having a face-to-face dialogue regardless of departments." The result may not adhere to the face-to-face dialogue concept of Levinas, which can be contextualized at the inter-departmental level. The highest response is "I can easily talk to co-employees in other departments," having a Mean of 3.90, numerically interpreted as 'observed'. The result shows that LGU employees can easily talk with their coworkers in other departments, and there could be no communication gap that exists among other departments. The result also reveals that face-to-face dialogue could be utilized as an effective means of communication when the LGUs would properly facilitate and support the initiative. On the other hand, the lowest observed indicators are "most of the interdepartmental meetings I attend are useful for obtaining the information I need to do my job" and "Interdepartmental communications are welcomed to meet goals and objectives," both having a Means of 2.45 numerically interpreted as 'somewhat observed.'The result may reveal that most interdepartmental meetings are not primarily useful for obtaining information, and interdepartmental communications are not utilized to meet goals and objectives. The result also manifests that face-to-face dialogue is not being used to improve job performance and to meet organizational goals and objectives. The result does not adhere to the concept of Levinas on face-to-face dialogue, wherein it should be utilized to understand the essence and relatedness of one another in fulfilling the organizations' common thoughts and goals.

Indicator		Mean	Dec. Equiv.	Rank
1	I feel comfortable giving information to my colleagues	4.20	O	1.5
2	I can share my ideas with my colleagues	4.05	O	7
3	I can freely talk about anything with my colleagues	4.15	SO	4
4	I can ask questions from my colleagues	4.15	SO	4
5	I can express my emotions to my colleagues	3.60	SO	9
6	My colleagues share important information with me that is relevant to our job	3.90	SO	8
7	My colleagues could express their ideas to me	4.10	O	6
8	Most information I receive from my colleagues is detailed and accurate	3.50	SO	10
9	I feel comfortable communicating with my colleagues	4.15	SO	4
10	We can communicate face-to-face with my colleagues	4.20	SO	1.5
Overall Mean		**4.00**	**O**	
Standard Deviation		**0.26**	**LD**	

Table 4.
Level of face-to-face communication with colleagues

Level of face-to-face communication with colleagues.
Table 4 shows the level of face-to-face communication with colleagues as perceived by government employees. The overall result presents that the level of face-to-face communication with colleagues is 'observed', having a Mean of 4.00 with a standard deviation of 0.26, indicating that there is a 'low deviation' on the responses. The standard deviation indicates a low degree of variability in the responses, indicating that, most likely, the government employees have almost similar perceptions in terms of their face-to-face communication with their colleagues. The result indicates that the respondents can observe that they have face-to-face communication with their colleagues in their respective departments. The highest responses are "I feel comfortable giving information to my colleagues" and "We can communicate face-to-face with my colleagues," having Means of 4.20 numerically interpreted as 'observed.' The result indicates that the respondents are comfortable giving information to their colleagues, and they can easily have a face-to-face dialogue. The result affirms Levinas's concept of face-to-face dialogue, in which face-to-face communication should be emphasized and must exist in every interaction. On the other hand, the lowest observed indicator is "most information I receive from my colleagues is detailed and accurate," having a Mean of 3.50, numerically interpreted as 'somewhat observed'. The result reveals that the LGU employees perceive that the information they receive from their colleagues is not fully detailed and accurate. The result may affirm the findings in Table 2 that some people tend to hoard important information. Further, information may vary because the face-to-face dialogue is not fully observed, and as a result, some information could be distorted. Some information also could have been sourced from grapevines, in which accuracy is not guaranteed.

3. CONCLUSIONS
In general, face-to-face communication with superiors is sometimes observed. The government employees received information as relayed by their superiors or from top management but not necessarily through face-to-face communication. The result also reveals that communication barriers are sometimes observed, which may hinder effective dialogues. There were instances when some individuals hoard important information, and they tend to benefit

themselves from this information. Moreover, inter-departmental communication is sometimes observed. It was found that employees can easily talk with other departments, but most inter-departmental communications are not necessarily intended to improve job performance and meet organizational goals and objectives.Lastly, face-to-face communication with colleagues is observed, but information transmitted by colleagues is only sometimes accurate and detailed.

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