

THE EFFECT OF SUPERVISOR-SUBORDINATE COMMUNICATION ON SUPERVISOR-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP (A STUDY OF MACAU)

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Abstract

Many research studies demonstrated that supervisor-subordinate communication has significant impact on different variables on subordinates' work outcome and job satisfaction. In 1987, organizational communication – job satisfaction studies were summarized by Pincus and Rayfield. It was found that superior-subordinate communication and its link to job satisfaction received most research attention. While most of the studies in this area focused on its relationship to subordinate general job satisfaction, none of them took detail examination in its effect on various factors of supervisor-subordinate relationship. Based on the research conducted by the International Communication Association with 17 organizations in the United States and Canada in 1979, the supervisor-subordinate relationship was found to be the most important predictors of job satisfaction. Moreover, most major studies in supervisor-subordinate communication were conducted in a western context, the applications and implications of the results may not be totally valid in Asian cultures such as Macau, Hong Kong and other overseas Chinese communities. Recently, Macau has caught the world's attention in its handover to China on the 20th December of 1999. Like Hong Kong, this small territory is known as the gateway to China from the world. The findings of this study will enhance our understanding in the areas of supervisor-subordinate communication, and employee satisfaction with supervisor in the context of an Asian community.

The present study examined the relationship of supervisor-subordinate communication to supervisor-subordinate relationship in terms of trust, fairness, friendliness and competence. Total 915 questionnaires with 74 supervisors and 841 subordinates were under analyzed. Results suggest that despite different nationalities between supervisors and subordinates, most subordinates perceived no language problem when communicating with supervisors. Besides, while subordinates generally perceived themselves very open in expressing their opinions to supervisors, the supervisors did not seem to be very willing in accepting different ideas from subordinates. All the variables in communication satisfaction correlate significantly to the variables of supervisor satisfaction. Concern for subordinates, communication style and openness of supervisor in receiving different opinions are the most unsatisfied communication variables and interestingly, they are also the ones having the strongest correlations with the total supervisor relationship. Furthermore, "communicate actively with subordinate" was found to be the most important communication style variable in related to supervisor satisfaction. Finally, significant differences were found on various factors of supervisor satisfaction and overall communication satisfaction with different age groups.

1. Introduction

Supervisor-subordinate communication has been one of the most popular areas in organizational communication research. Research has shown that one-third to two-thirds of the managers' time communicating with subordinates (Jablin, 1985) and most supervisory communication is verbal and occurs in face-to-face contexts (Luthans & Larsen, 1986; Whitely, 1984, 1985). In 1987, organizational communication – job satisfaction studies were summarized by Pincus and Rayfield. It was found that superior-subordinate communication and its link to job satisfaction received most research attention.

While most of the studies in the area of supervisor-subordinate communication focused on its relationship to subordinate general job satisfaction, not much of them took detail examination in its effect on various factors in supervisor-subordinate relationship. Based on the research conducted by the International Communication Association with 17 organizations in the United States and Canada in 1979, the supervisor-subordinate relationship and employees' involvement within their work unit were found to be the most important predictors of job satisfaction (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, & Lesniak, 1979). Moreover, most major studies in supervisor-subordinate communication were conducted in a western context, the applications and implications of the results may not be totally valid in Asian cultures such as Macau, Hong Kong and other overseas Chinese communities. Recently, Macau has caught the world's attention in its handover to China on the 20th December of 1999. Like Hong Kong, this small territory is known as the gateway to China from the world. The findings of the present study will enhance our understanding in the areas of supervisor-subordinate communication, and employee satisfaction with supervisor in the context of an Asian community.

2 Literature Review

Among the research areas on supervisor-subordinate communication, openness in communication is one of the major topics. Jablin stated that “in an open communication relationship between superior and subordinate, both parties perceive the other interactant as a willing and receptive listener and refrain from responses that might be perceived as providing negative relational or disconfirming feedback.” (Jablin, 1979, p.1204) Openness in supervisor-subordinate communication involves two interrelated dimensions: openness in message-sending and openness in message-receiving (Redding, 1972). Many researchers reported that subordinates’ perceptions of openness are positively related to their job satisfaction, and in particular their satisfaction with supervision. Wheelless, Wheelless, and Howard (1984) suggested that subordinates’ perceptions of supervisory “receptivity” (openness in message receiving) are a powerful predictor of workers’ job satisfaction. On the other hand, Tjosvold (1985a, b) found that subordinates’ perceptions of openness are also related to the nonverbal warmth (communicated through eye gaze, posture, facial expression, and voice tone) displayed by superior in their interactions with subordinates.

Regarding upward communication, one of the more frequently reported results is that subordinates are often hesitant to communicate upward information that is unfavorable or negative to themselves. Fulk and Mani (1986) examined the degree to which supervisors’ downward communications affects the accuracy and frequency of subordinates’ upward communication distortion. They suggested a reciprocal relationship between superiors’ and subordinates’ communication behaviors such that “subordinates reported withholding information and generally distorting communication sent upward when their supervisors were seen as actively withholding information” (p.503).

Some studies focused on the communication behaviors of “effective” compared to “ineffective” superiors. Manz and Sims (1984) reported that effective “unleaders” (leaders/coordinators of self-managed groups) display distinctive types of communication behaviors such as encouraging open discussion of problems, acting as a communication link with other groups. Furthermore, Reddings, after reviewing the researchers, summarized that good supervisors are considered to be: (1) “communication minded” – enjoy communicating; (2) approachable, open, willing, and empathic listeners; (3) oriented toward asking or persuading in contrast to demanding or telling; (4) sensitive to the needs and feelings of subordinates; and (5) open in communicating information to subordinates and willing to explain “why” policies and regulations are being enacted (Reddings, 1972, p.443).

Other studies have focused on the exploring relationships between a number of superiors’ and subordinates’ communication-related characteristics and subordinates’ levels of job satisfaction. For example, Johnson, Luthans, and Hennessey (1984) reported that “internal” (with respect to locus of control) supervisors tend to use persuasion more with subordinates than “external” leaders, and that supervisor persuasiveness is positively related to subordinate satisfaction with supervision. Relatedly, Infante and Gordon (1985) suggest that subordinates’ satisfaction with supervision are positively related to the degree to which they perceive their superiors as high in argumentativeness and low on verbal aggressiveness. Similarly, Richmond, McCroskey, and Davis (1986) found that subordinate satisfaction is related to their supervisors’ use of power and affinity-seeking strategies. On the other hand, Remland (1984) reported that perceptions of leader “consideration” are positively related to the degree to which supervisors display less status nonverbally and subordinates exhibit more status nonverbally.

Lastly, in reviewing the literatures exploring feedback in superior-subordinate communication, Jablin concluded that feedback from superiors to subordinates appears related to subordinate performance and satisfaction, and a subordinate’s performance to a large extent controls the nature of his/her superior’s feedback (Jablin, 1979, p.1214). It was suggested that subordinates receiving feedback from sources high versus low in credibility judge the feedback as more accurate, the sources as more perceptive, tend to express greater satisfaction with the feedback, and are more likely to use the performance suggestions offered in the feedback (Bannister, 1986; Earley, 1986). Larson in 1986 stated that “Supervisors may often be reluctant to give subordinates negative performance feedback and... this reluctance can affect both the content and frequency of the feedback they give” (p.405). On the other hand, it was found that supervisors with limited authority and informal influence in decision making do not often use confrontative tactics (oral warnings) in disciplining subordinates (Beyer & Trice, 1984). Besides, positive supervisory feedback to new employees is negatively related to their turnover (Parsons, Herold, & Leatherwood, 1985). Furthermore, supervisors tend to exhibit positive verbal reward behaviors more frequently in response to high performers, as opposed to goal-setting, punitive, and task information behaviors in response to low performers (Sims & Manz, 1984).

In summary, findings of researches demonstrated the importance of supervisor-subordinate communication in various subordinates’ work-behaviors. The purpose of the present study is to examine the various factors of supervisor-subordinate communication and supervisor-subordinate relationship and to study their relationship between each other in an Asian context. The above research findings have provided the framework for this research concerning communication behaviors of supervisor and supervisor-subordinate relationship. Based on those results, five major communication variables are chosen for the present research. They are: (1) openness of supervisor in accepting different opinions, (2) openness of subordinate in expressing their own opinions, (3) informative of the supervisor in providing information, (4) feedback provided to subordinates, and (5) concern of the supervisor to subordinates. In addition, due to the special

environment of Macau where different nationalities between supervisors and subordinates are commonly found, the sixth variable of “language understanding” is added in this study. Subordinates may need to communicate with their supervisors in the language other than their mother language. Therefore, language problem becomes a relevant barrier in supervisor-subordinate communication. On the other hand, supervisor-satisfaction variables including employee general satisfaction with the supervisor and employee perspective on the supervisor in terms of trust, fairness, friendliness and competence. It is hypothesized that the higher the subordinate satisfaction on various factors of the supervisor-subordinate communication, the higher the supervisor-subordinate relationship in terms of trust, fairness, friendliness and competence.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

Questionnaires were administered to 1049 employees from seven out of the total fourteen 4 and 5- star hotels in Macau. This contribute to 24% of employees in the 4&5 star hotels and 16% of the total employee in hotel industry in Macau based on statistics of 1998. Due to the control of the size and overall administrative system of the hotels, only 4 and 5 star hotels are invited to participate in this study. Hotel industry is chosen for this study because this is one of the most important industries in Macau in terms of the annual revenue and employment. Respondents completed questionnaires at the company location on company time. Because of the inconsistency and incompleteness of some questionnaires, only 915 questionnaires with 841 subordinates and 74 supervisors were used for analysis. Based on the information provided by the Human Resource Department of each participated hotel, one supervisor who had the most work interaction with subordinates was identified in each department. Subordinates were asked to evaluate their communication satisfaction and supervisor satisfaction towards the identified supervisor in their own department. Supervisors are asked to answer the questionnaires based on their relationships towards the subordinates of their own departments.

Among the 74 supervisors, 51(68.9%) were male and 23 (31.1%) were female. Average age was 35. 43.2% are from local Macau while 23% are from Mainland China. 58.1% of them with secondary education level and 17.6% with bachelor degree or higher. As for the 841 subordinates, 54.2% were male and 44.7% were females. Average age was 26 with 45.9% were between 21-30 years old. 64.4% were come from Mainland China while 20% are local people in Macau. 60.9% of them with secondary education level and 6.3% with bachelor degree or higher.

3.2 Measures

(1) Communication Satisfaction

A 29-item questionnaire about communication was developed to survey managerial communication behaviors. The first 23 items assess communication content, or the sorts of functions played by managerial communication, and the second 6 items exploring communication style, or the manner in which the content was conveyed. Respondents indicated, on a Likert- 5-points scale, how much they agree with each of the 29 statements concerning communication behaviors occurred during their supervisor-subordinate interaction. Wordings of the questions in the questionnaires for the supervisors are opposite from the ones for subordinates. For example, instead of the statement “My supervisor never quick to disagree with me” in the subordinate questionnaires, this statement will change to “ I never quick to disagree with my subordinates” in the questionnaires for supervisors.

The 23 “content” items were intended to measure six dimensions of supervisor-subordinate communication: a. openness of the supervisor in receiving different opinions (5 items), b. openness of subordinate in expressing their own opinions (4 items), c. information released to subordinates (7 items), d. feedback provided to subordinates about their performance (3 items), e. supervisor’s concern for subordinates’ well-being (3 items), and f. language understanding between supervisor and subordinate (1 item). Questions were drawn from the suggestions based on Hatfield’s (1977) and Huseman, Hatfield and Gatewood’s (1978) typology of superior-subordinate communication with extra questions added by the researcher to match the special work environment of Macau.

The six “style” items asked the subordinates to rate their supervisors’ communication style including 1.“come on strong” when communicate with them, 2.quick to express disagreement, 3.communicate actively, 4.listen carefully, 5.criticize subordinate in front of others and 6.make fun of others. These items are primarily based on the dimensions of “communication style” constructed by Morton and Miller (1975).

(2) Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

A 13-item questionnaire measuring supervisor-subordinate relationship in this study was developed by the researcher based on the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) of 1984. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) involved 72 items relate to five dimensions of job satisfaction: work, supervision, pay, promotion and workers. The 72 items, was reduced to 30 by Wheelless, Wheelless and Howard in 1984. Only the items for supervision were used in this study for reference. Extra questions were added by the research based on the topics of interest being studied in this research.

Since satisfaction on supervision is the main topic of this research, the researcher attempts to measure supervisor-subordinate relationship based on five dimensions: 1.Subordinate perception on trust between supervisor and subordinate, 2. Subordinate perception on supervisor's fairness, 3. Subordinate perception on supervisor's friendliness, 4. Subordinate perception on supervisor's competence and lastly 5. Total employee satisfaction on supervisor (the sum of the four variables).

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of supervisor-subordinate relationship variables including trust, fairness, friendliness and competence. Among the four variables, competence had the highest mean of 3.5 while fairness had the lowest mean of 3.2. This suggests that subordinates generally perceive their supervisors competent but not fair enough when dealing with their subordinates. Reliability ranged from 0.56 to 0.86, indicates relatively high internal consistency of the multi-item scales for the four dimensions. Noticed that Alpha of total supervisor-subordinate satisfaction is even as high as 0.89.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability
Trust between supervisors & subordinates	3.341	.780	.6853
Fairness of supervisors	3.233	.825	.7518
Friendliness of supervisors	3.419	.929	.5590
Competence of supervisors	3.495	.899	.8557
Total supervisor satisfaction (sum of the four dimensions)	13.501	2.937	.8901

Data of the various factors of supervisor-subordinate communication and relationship were both under further examination based on different groups of age, gender, birth-place and education background. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used to test if there are significant differences between the groups. It turns out that concerning variables in supervisor-subordinate relationship, only the differences within groups of age and educational background are found to be significant. For communication variables, only Overall communication relationship satisfaction was found to have significant difference in various age groups. The results of these factors are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 as follow:

TABLE 2 Descriptive Statistics of Different Age Groups on Supervisor-subordinate Relationship plus Overall Communication Satisfaction.

AGE	trust between supervisor & subordinate	subordinate perspective on supervisor's fairness	subordinate perspective on supervisor's friendliness	subordinate perspective on supervisor competence	Total supervisor relationship satisfaction	Overall communication relationship satisfaction
20 or under (N=27)	3.04	3.03	3.21	3.07	12.33	3.30
21 - 30 (N=384)	3.23	3.14	3.33	3.43	13.14	3.38
31 – 40 (N=236)	3.47	3.36	3.56	.61	14.04	3.67
41 - 50 (N=153)	3.46	3.25	3.43	3.51	13.62	3.67
51 – 60 (N=33)	3.41	3.41	3.61	3.73	14.09	3.76
over 60 (N=1)	4.67	4.67	4.67	5.00	19.00	4.00
TOTAL (N=834)	3.34	3.23	3.42	3.50	13.50	3.53
ANOVA						
F	5.27	3.33	2.76	3.34	4.59	4.19
Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 2 shows us that the perceptions on the various factors of supervisor-subordinate relationship and the overall communication relationship are significantly different within the age groups. A very obvious pattern appeared that the youngest age group with subordinates of 20 year-old or under having the lowest score in all the factors – it seems that they are the most unsatisfied ones. On the other hands, people in age group of 51 to 60 have the highest mean on all the factors with the only exception on Trust. Note that the average age of supervisor is 35. With the youngest group being the most unsatisfied group while the oldest group being the most satisfied one, this result seems to suggest that subordinates may be treated differently by the supervisors based on their age.

Table 3 shows that the scores on all the factors of supervisor-subordinate relationship with various education-level groups are significantly different with the exception of “supervisor’s friendliness”. The highest scores are found in the group of bachelor degree subordinates while the lowest ones are spread in different categories of matriculation, vocational institute and master degree. This result indicates that subordinates with bachelor degree seem to have the highest satisfaction in their supervisor-subordinate relationships.

TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics of Different Educational Level Groups on Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

EDUCATION LEVEL	trust between supervisor & subordinate	subordinate perspective on supervisor's fairness	subordinate perspective on supervisor's friendliness	subordinate perspective on supervisor competence	Total supervisor relationship satisfaction
primary or under (N=122)	3.40	3.22	3.43	3.48	13.47
Secondary school (N=509)	3.34	3.24	3.42	3.52	13.54
Matriculation (N=22)	3.24	3.00	3.30	3.38	12.92
Vocational Institute (N=73)	3.17	3.06	3.45	3.24	13.00
Polytechnic/diploma (N=40)	3.30	3.28	3.41	3.56	13.58
Bachelor degree (N=51)	3.60	3.48	3.44	3.60	14.17
Master degree (N=1)	3.33	2.67	4.0	4.00	14.00
Doctor degree (N=1)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00
Others (N=6)	3.17	3.17	3.00	3.22	12.56
TOTAL (N=825)	3.34	3.23	3.42	3.49	13.49
ANOVA Sig.	0.01	0.03	0.36	0.04	0.03

Factor analysis using a Principal Component Analysis procedure and Varimax Rotation suggested that among the four variables, fairness, friendliness and competence could be combined together as one factor while trust as the second factor. However, the researcher decided to keep all the four variables for more detail examination.

4.2 Communication Satisfaction

Table 4 shows the means, standard deviations, plus the internal consistency reliability of the multi-item scales for the seven dimensions of content and style involved in supervisor-subordinate communication, plus the total communication satisfaction.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Communication Variables

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability
1. OPEN.SUPERVISOR	3.1872	.8117	.8525	
2. OPEN.SUBORDINATE	3.7298	.5978	.6284	
3. INFORM	3.4219	.7130	.8715	
4. FEEDBACK	3.5096	.8872	.5091	
5. CONCERN	3.2546	.8611	.8143	
6. LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDING	3.9481	.8658	Nil (1 item)	
7. COMMUNICATION STYLE	3.3144	.7577	.7900	
8. TOTAL COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION (sum of the 7 dimensions)	3.5232	.9405	.8991	

From Table 4, we can see that the highest mean among the seven dimensions is language understanding (3.95). Despite different nationalities between supervisors and subordinates, most subordinates perceived no language problem when communicating with supervisors. The second highest mean is from openness in subordinate (3.73). Subordinates generally perceived themselves very open in expressing their opinions to supervisors. Conversely, openness in supervisor turned out to have the smallest mean among all dimensions (3.19). This suggested that based on subordinates' perspectives, while they believed they were very honest in expressing their ideas to supervisors, the supervisors did not seem to be very willing in accepting different ideas from subordinates. The second and the third lowest means are from Concern for subordinates (3.25) and Communication Style (3.31) respectively. Among the seven dimensions in communication, the result implies that subordinate would like to have the supervisors be more willing in accepting their ideas, to show more concern to their well-being and have a more positive "style" when communicating with them.

Regarding reliability, only two scales, Feedback (.5091) & Openness in subordinate (.6284) failed to meet a .70 criterion for adequate scale reliability. Reliability for the total communication satisfaction is 0.90 which suggesting a high internal consistency. Overall, the internal consistency of the questionnaires on communication is relatively high with alpha ranged from 0.51 to 0.90.

Responses in communication satisfaction of supervisors and subordinates were under factor analyzed using a Principal Component Analysis procedure and Varimax Rotation to determine independent factors. Instead of seven variables originally set up for study, a 4-factor solution was yielded. Factor I consisted of questions for Informative and Feedback; Factor II for openness of supervisor; Factor III for communication style and language problem and Factor IV for openness of subordinate. The three questions for Supervisor's concern for subordinates were distributed among the Factor I, II & III. However, after serious consideration, the researcher decided to use the original factors based on two reasons. First, considering the situation of Macau, it is not uncommon to find supervisors and subordinates communicate through the second language such as English for example, other than their mother languages. As in our samples, over 12% of the subordinates are non-Chinese, while there are over 80% of supervisors are Chinese people. Even within Chinese people, they might have different dialects as mother languages. Communication problems may be created simply because they do not fully understand the language itself. Thus, it is legitimate to include language understanding as a factor in examining supervisor-subordinate communication in this study. Second, supervisor-subordinate relationship is also one kind of the human relationships which requires mutual respect and concern to maintain. Other than a working relationship, the researcher believes that subordinates who perceive their supervisors concern about their well-beings as friends would probably improve their supervisor-subordinate relationship. To test if this is true or not, the original set of factors including concern for subordinates and language understanding is used in this study for analyses.

4.3 Communication Satisfaction and Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

Table 5 shows the correlations between the 8 dimensions of communication and the five dimensions of supervisor-subordinate relationship. Noticed that all the correlations reported are all statistically significant at 0.01 level. Besides, all the correlation coefficients are positive suggesting that all the communication dimensions are positively related to the supervisor relationship variables. Generally speaking, we can conclude that communication satisfaction enhances supervisor-subordinate relationship. When we examine the variables closely, there seems to be a pattern in the effect of communication variables on relationship variables. Total communication satisfaction was found to be the strongest communication variable correlated to all the dependant variables. However, among the seven dimensions of communication, concern for subordinates appeared to have the highest correlation coefficient value to the three out of four dependent variables: fairness, friendliness, competence and the second highest in Trust. On the other hand, communication style had the second highest correlation coefficient on all the four dependant variables. This result indicates that concern for subordinates and the communication style of the supervisor were found to be the most essential communication factors to employee perspective on trust, fairness, friendliness and competence of their supervisors. The same pattern is also found in the Total supervisor satisfaction. The three most important factor in communication on total supervisor relationship satisfaction are: Concern for subordinates ($r=.715$), communication style ($r=.689$) and openness of supervisor ($r=.685$). Coincidentally, these are the same communication variables with the lowest communication satisfaction in subordinates.

TABLE 5 Correlations between communication satisfaction variables and supervisor-subordinate relationship variables. **

		trust between supervisor &	subordinate perspective on	subordinate perspective on	subordinate perspective on supervisor	Total supervisor relationship

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

		subordinate	supervisor's fairness	supervisor's friendliness	competence	satisfaction
Openness of supervisor in accepting different ideas	Pearson Correlation	.657	.613	.509	.569	.685
Openness in subordinate in expressing their opinions	Pearson Correlation	.495	.448	.443	.460	.533
Information released by supervisor	Pearson Correlation	.594	.591	.512	.592	.668
FEEDBACK	Pearson Correlation	.486	.570	.389	.465	.637
Concern for subordinates	Pearson Correlation	.626	.632	.575	.613	.715
I do not have language problem when communicating to my supervisor	Pearson Correlation	.364	.288	.318	.304	.378
Subordinate satisfaction in supervisor communication style	Pearson Correlation	.626	.631	.526	.592	.689
total communication satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.720	.715	.599	.673	.789

Table 6 below shows the descriptive statistics of the six communication styles. The two highest means are from the first and the last statements. Most subordinates perceived that their supervisors seldom made fun of them nor “come on strong” when communicated with them. The lowest means are from the statements “My supervisor never criticizes my work in front of others” and “My supervisor never quick to disagree with me.” This indicates that supervisors, should be more considerate when criticizing their subordinates and tried to be more patient in listening to their subordinates opinions.

TABLE 6 Descriptive Statistics of Communication Style Variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation
My supervisor never comes on strong when communicates with me	3.49	1.65
My supervisor never quick to disagree with me	3.22	.91
My supervisor always communicate actively with me	3.26	1.00
My supervisor always listens carefully to others	3.37	.97
My supervisor never criticizes my work in front of others	3.17	1.06
My supervisor never ridicules or makes fun of me	3.55	.98

Correlational analysis is used to examine the relationship between variables of communication styles and supervisor satisfaction. Again, all the variables are significantly correlated at 0.01 level. As the correlation coefficients are positive, we can conclude that the more positive the communication style of the supervisor perceived by the subordinate, the higher the employee satisfaction with the supervisor. The strongest correlation is in “My supervisor always communicate actively with me”. Since supervisors are occupying a higher status in the company, subordinates generally can only play a passive role in communication with supervisors. It is logical that the more active the supervisor communicate with subordinates, the more chances they could know each other and thus the more positive their relationship can become.

Responses for all the variables in communication and supervisor satisfaction were under scatter-plot matrix procedure for linear relationship examination before doing regression analysis. Language understanding did not show any linear relationship with all the dependent variables even after transformation of the data into natural log or squares. Therefore, the variable is dropped out from the regression model. Finally, after transforming the data of “friendliness” into natural log of friendliness, all independent variables in communication satisfaction have linear relationship with the dependant variables and were ready for regression analysis. Table 7 presents the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis which attempts to assess the effects of various communication variables on the four variables of supervisor-subordinate relationship, plus total supervisor satisfaction (sum of the four variables).

TABLE 7 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis: Effects of Employee Communication Satisfaction on Supervisor-subordinate Relationship

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: TOTAL SUPERVISOR SATISFACTION				
Predictors:		Beta	R	R ²
1.	total communication satisfaction	1.056	.789	.622
2.	concern for subordinates	.172	.807	.652
3.	communication style	-.279	.812	.659
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: TRUST				
Predictors:		Beta	R	R ²
1.	total communication satisfaction	.842	.720	.518
2.	communication style	-.207	.735	.540
3.	openness of supervisor	.165	.740	.548
4.	concern for subordinates	.103	.743	.552
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: FAIRNESS				
Predictors:		Beta	R	R ²
1.	total communication satisfaction	.614	.715	.511
2.	concern for subordinates	.199	.728	.530
3.	feedback	.113	.731	.534
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: FRIENDLINESS (Natural Log)				
Predictors:		Beta	R	R ²
1.	total communication satisfaction	.071	.674	.455
2.	concern for subordinates	.045	.703	.495
3.	openness in subordinate	.021	.707	.500
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: COMPETENCE				
Predictors:		Beta	R	R ²
1.	total communication satisfaction	.568	.673	.453
2.	concern for subordinates	.208	.689	.475
3.	information released by supervisor	.187	.695	.483

Examination of R² values show communication variables exert similar level of effect on the four supervisor-subordinate relationship variables with ranged from .49 to .66. R² of total supervisor satisfaction model is 0.66 which means communication satisfaction explained 66% of the variance in employee total supervisor satisfaction.

The order in which the communication variables entered the stepwise regression for each dependent variable also provide us information on the relative importance of the specific communication practice. Total communication satisfaction appeared the top in all the regression models. On the other hand, “concern for subordinates” was found in all the regression models. That means when all the communication variables are presented together, concern for subordinates appeared to be the most important for supervisor-subordinate relationship.

5. Comparison of Previous Studies

Generally speaking, the results of the present study conducted in Macau support the previous studies conducted in the west demonstrating that supervisor-subordinate communication satisfaction does exert a positive impact on employee satisfaction with supervisor. Additional comparisons are as follows:

1. In one of the earlier studies, Burke and Wilcoz (1969) conducted a research from 323 telephone operators in a large public utility and found communication openness between superiors and subordinates to be positively related to employee job satisfaction. On the other hand, Wheelless, Wheelless, and Howard (1984) also suggested that Openness in supervisor (message receiving) was a powerful predictor of workers’ job satisfaction. In this study, openness of supervisor in accepting different ideas did show a significant correlation with total supervisor relationship satisfaction ($r = 0.69$). However, looking at the data in Regression analysis, openness in supervisor only appeared on the regression model in Trust. This suggested that while openness of supervisor is important in employee supervisor satisfaction, its effect reduced when other communication variables are available. This might also indicate that in Macau, concern for subordinates and communication style are even better predictors of workers’ supervisor satisfaction than openness of supervisor.

2. In this study, openness of subordinate in expressing their ideas is significantly correlated to information released by supervisor with $r = 0.639$. This supported the result of Fulk and Mani (1986) concerning the reciprocal relationship between superiors' and subordinates' communication behaviors. "Subordinates reported withholding information and generally distorting communication sent upward when their supervisors were seen as actively withholding information." (p.503).
3. Concern for subordinates (content) and active communication (style) turned out to be the most important communication dimensions, for various dimensions in supervisor satisfaction in this study. This matched the findings of Reddings in 1972 about effective supervisors are considered to be communication minded and sensitive to the needs and feelings of subordinates.
4. Result of previous studies in the west had repeatedly found Trust to be positively related to employee satisfaction. For example, Muchinsky in 1977 related 16 communication dimensions of Roberts and O'Reilly's organizational communication questionnaire to the five job dimensions of Job Descriptive Index in a large public utility research with 659 subjects found that the dimension of "trust in supervisor" had the highest correlation with job satisfaction. Here in this study, trust is a dimension in supervisor-relationship instead of communication dimensions. We found that trust is, as the results of previous studies, significantly correlated to supervisor satisfaction with $r = 0.845$, but comparatively lower than fairness ($r = .868$) and competence ($r = .864$). This implies that regarding satisfaction with supervisor, people in Macau generally considered fairness and competence of the supervisor more important than trust. On the other hand, however, Trust turned out to have the highest correlation among the four dimensions in supervisor-satisfaction with total communication satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

One immediate conclusion of this study is that communication satisfaction is highly related to the supervisor-subordinate relationship. "Concern for subordinates" and positive "communication style" seems to be the two most important communication factors in affecting supervisor-subordinate relationship here in Macau. This suggests that for good relationship to be developed between supervisor and subordinate, like other kinds of interpersonal relationship, the feeling of being cared and respected are essential.

People in Macau generally perceived their supervisors are not fair enough in dealing with their subordinates. Besides, they would like to see their supervisors more willing to accept their ideas and show more concern about their well-beings. In terms of communication style, supervisors should be more careful not to criticize their subordinates in front of other people and be more patient in listening to their ideas. Besides, "communicate actively with subordinates" is necessary and significant in developing communication satisfaction.

This research explores the areas in supervisor-subordinate communication and supervisor-subordinate relationships in an Asian city – Macau. Additional researches are needed in this city along several different lines. First, the result of this study indicates that age and educational background may be related to supervisor-subordinate relationship and overall communication satisfaction. One speculation is that supervisors might treat subordinates differently based on their age and education level. Further studies in these areas are absolutely needed. Relational demography between supervisor and subordinate and its relationship with supervisor-subordinate relationship and communication would be an interesting topic in future studies. Besides, subordinates at different levels within the organizational structure could be surveyed to determine if dyad's position in the organizational hierarchy affects their communication satisfaction. Supervisor-subordinate communication can also be related to other work outcomes such as subordinate performance or supervisor performance appraisal. In addition, since most managers act both as supervisors and subordinates, it would be interesting to know if supervisors who are dissatisfied with the communication relationship with their supervisors also dissatisfied with the communication relationship with their subordinates. Lastly, the topic of perceptual congruence would also be an interesting topic. Would perceptual congruence on communication between supervisor and subordinate enhance their relationship?

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