**ANALYSIS OF “THIS WEEK” IN THE COMMUNICATION CLIMATE OF EMPLOYEES OF ELF PETROLEUM NIGERIA LIMITED, PORT HARCOURT – RIVERS STATE**

**BY**

**BARINEM SATURDAY BIEN**

**UCP/N2013/MC/084**

**TO**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,**

**UYO CITY POLYTECHNIC, UYO.**

**AKWA IBOM STATE**

**SEPTEMBER, 2015**

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**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF ORDINARY NATIONAL DIPLOMA (OND) IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

**SEPTEMBER, 2015**

**CERTIFICATION**

This is certified that this research is an original work on the “Analysis of “This Week” in the Communication Climate of Employees of Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited, Port Harcourt – Rivers State” conducted by BARINEM SATURDAY BIENwith Registration number UCP/N2013/MC/064 in the department of mass communication.

**Madam Philomena Umoren** -------------------

Supervisor Signature

**Pst. George Udoh (ph.D)**  -------------------

Head of Department Signature

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External Examiner Signature

**DEDICATION**

The research work is dedicated to God almighty for his protection and guidance throughout the successful completion of my study.

This acknowledges will not be complete without my head of department Pst. George Udoh (ph.D)

Above all I thank all those who wish me well during these programmers.

May God bless them abundantly Amen.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

It is a clear and true statement that I am what I am today because of the infinite love and mercy and Gods enduring grace and his faithfulness on me; It is also a fact that this research work would not have seen the light of the day without the intellectual contribution of my supervisor Madam Philomena Umoren who sacrifice her precious time and effort to read through my manuscript in order for this work to be a masterpiece.

I gladly appreciation my lecturers in the department of Mass Communication; the (Head of Department) Pst. George Udoh, Ph.D, Mr. Eniefiok Iyang, Mr. Emmanuel Ebong and Mr. K. V. Ibanga for their great effort and assistance.

My special thank goes Mr./Mrs. Saturday Bien for their positive support and encouragement throughout my study in the polytechnic.

I appreciate my Sis. Victoria and my friends; Monica, Vicky, Peace and Aniebiet for their encouragement. May God Bless all who contributed to the success of this work. Amen

**ABSTRACT**

This study was on the impact of “This Week” on the communication climate of employees of Elf petroleum Nigeria limited, EPNL, and Port Harcourt. Four researches questions were formulated for the study. The content analysis research method was used. The population of study was 52 editions of “This Week” published between July, 2007 and July, 2008 while the sample size was 26 editions. The findings revealed that “The Week”, being a weekly published was an effective medium of internal communication in the organization. It was further gathered that to an extent, the newsletter gave prominence to employee-related issues. The findings also showed that the direction of courage of employee issues in the house journal was positive hence, building a good communication climate for the employees. It was also discovered that with the total of 60% courage of high employee-related issues, “This Week” has positively impacted on the communication climate of EPNL’s employees. The study of recommended a complete overhauling of “This Week” to increase its number of pages and total dedication to employee issues than host communities. It also recommended that employee-relation stories should often occupy front page, and that even stories that are unfavorable to management should always be carried. The study further recommended that the house journal should assume more interactive status and not a management harangues, and that the introduction of cartoons should be considered so that the newsletter can be bit biting on management, daring where articles tremble.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING**

* 1. **Background to the Study**

Communication is to society, what a skeleton is to human body (Udoakah 2006, p. 77). This shows that no relationship flourishes without establishing the maintaining communication networks. Hence, the better the communication structure, the healthier the relationship.

These envisaged favorable relationships transcend the simple interpersonal ones to those of complex organizations and major establishments in various sectors. The significance of this has necessitated and justified the advocacy of effective communication pathways in organizations so as to increase productivity without puncturing the balloon of goodwill to any of the public.

Put simply, this forms of major thrust of the dimension of public relation that is essentially for the staff of any organization. Employee relations float on the waters of internal communication. It concerns itself with all forms of communication directed at the employees of an organization for the purpose of harmonizing relationships between the management and the internal publics.

According to Stauss and Hoffmann (2000, p. 143) as cited in Tench and Yeomans (2006, p.334), internal communication is the planning use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitude and behaviors of current employees. These employees could be communicated through a variety of methods, including newsletters, notice boards, staff briefings and intranets.

Tench and Yeomans (2006, p.337) posits that the strategies purpose of internal communication can perhaps best be summaries as one that is concerned with building two-way involving relationships with internal public, with the goal of improving organizational effectiveness. Their justification is anchored on the fact that better informed employees were thought to be better motivated employees who, in turn contribution to increased productivity – this belief still holds water today.

The basic communication needs of employees, they argue, are: general information about the organization, specific information to help them to do their jobs, clarity about their roles, a clear company/organization vision, information on workplace practices, opportunities to be involved and consulted, feedback on performance, access to training and development, and access to communication channels.

Of all the media literature that could be used for effective internal communication, the house journal seems to be the most appropriate since it could enhance feedback, or has feedback mechanism, and thereby building good employee-management relationship.

Benson-Eluwa (1998) avers that house journals or organs are special information media created in an organization to share information and to secure the participation of all employees in the company.

There are basically five types of house journal: the sales bulletin, the newsletter, magazine, tabloid newsletter, and the wall newsletter. Different organizations public one type or the other. Their choice of a particular house journal against another is informed by the target public in most cases. For instance, “The Shell Bulletin” is a monthly news magazine for the staff of shell Nigeria; “Mobil community News” is a newspaper published by ExxonMobil to its host communities; Mobil news” is for ExxonMobil employees, while Elf petroleum Nigeria limited (EPNL) Published “ partnership” newspaper on sustainable development to its host communities. But the house journal of focus to this study is “This Week”- a weekly newsletter for staff of EPNL and TUPNI (subsidiaries of total).

A newsletter is just what the name implies – a letter that carries news about an organization to its employees or constituents. The readers are usually interested if the newsletter takes the right tone, it can be valuable channel of communication.

A newsletter can promote organizational objectives, but it should not be used to mount harangues. If it is nothing more than the voice of management, it may be a failure, but if it provides genuine two-way communication, it can be a valuable part of a public relations program (Wilcox and Nolte 199, p. 321).

Wilcox and Nolte (1990, p.321) mention some of the employee-related issues worth including in an organization’s newsletter to include: job anniversaries, sports, promotion, transfers, awards and honors, human interest, work features and employee organizations.

When these issues are not taken care of by any organization’s house journal, chances are that informal groups are likely to spring up, and grapevines will blossom, and this could be devastating to any organization. The prevailing effect of this sets the tone of communication climate in the organization.

According to Adler and Elmhorst (1999, p.126), social scientist use communication climate to describe the quality of personal relationships in an organization. They say the weather metaphor suggested by the term ‘climate’ is quite apt because the mood of workplace can be described as sunny and calm, cold and stormy, or in similar terms. Organizations create an overall climate, which can be healthy or polluted; but within that environment individual relationships have their own microclimates. For instance, an interaction with one colleague might be described as icy while that with another is warm.

Communication climate can define organization climate or job satisfaction, or otherwise. Positive climate occur when people believed they are appreciated. Scholars have labeled messages that express feeling of value as “confirming” and those that fail express valuing or those that explicitly show a lack of valuing – as “disconfirming” (Adler and Elmhorst, 1999, p. 126).

A communication climate is supportive when it focuses on solving problems, not ‘controlling’ others; almost, not manipulating; show concern for others; demonstrate an attitude of equality; listen with an open mind; and give praises where necessary of course, one can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

On the contrary, Adler and Elmhorst (1999, p.126) also says that a defensive climate is based on arrogance, displaying superiority attitude and are not bothered to give explanations to subordinates. There, undue criticisms fill the air using the “you” language and pointing a verbal finger of accusation at the receiver.

Since organization communication precedes and gives rise to organizational climate, and communication climate specifically, it, therefore, means “This Week” – an internal organizational publication of EPNL is capable of impacting on the communication climate of employees of the company. But this shall be contingent upon the prominence accorded to staff issues on the content of this house journal, or otherwise relegating them to a position of insignificance as shall be attested to by the employees or revealed by content analyzing “This Week” within a defined time frame.

* 1. **Statement of the Problem**

Organizations have used house journals among other media literature and communication methods, to achieved public relations objectives in the different dimensions of public relations.

However, it is not always the case that such an approach has succeeded as contents of some internal house journals seem to be catering for internal publics without sufficiently addressing the interest of the public(s) (the employees) as if it were meant for community relations, government relations or even international public relations purposes. Or, worse still, as management’s mouthpiece.

Sometime late last year, there was a serious face of between management and employees of EPNL, Port Harcourt. This paralyzed work in the company for about a week and security personal were drafted into the company. The bone of contention was an alleged extension of retirement age of foreign expatriate from 60-65 years, and appointing an underserved expatriate into a management position which the Nigerian employees frowned at.

The following Monday when work resumed, “this week” came out traditionally, but instead of carrying stories of the event that held the company to ransom the previous week, it covered management visit to Brick House (Rivers State Government House), building of new database on scholarships/skill acquisition and how new Egi Youth Federation executive visited the company (Egi is one of the host communities of EPNL). Very little attention was paid to staff issues on the column called “solidarity” in that week’s edition. And it was natural that most employees had no interest in reading the publication because they probably felt that t heir interest was not covered.

This way, the essence of “This Week” as a house journal, primarily meant for internal public and circulation, that should have served as a potent tool for nourishing the internal communication climate of the organization, gets defeated since today’s employees cannot be so film-flamed by management as it hitherto was. Indeed, employees are becoming more aware of the antics and gimmicks of the management cadre. In essence, if public relations require effective relationships between the organization and its different publics, then charity should being at home” employees should not be taken for granted. In the case of EPNL, “This Week” could have served as an interactive channel and thereby creating a positive communication climate that would have forestalled the face-off which crippled activates ink the company.

It is against the backdrop of aforestated situation that it becomes expedient to question: to what extent has “This Week” impacted on the communication climate of EPNL employees (management and non-management)?

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the frequency of publication of EPNL;s house journal –“This Week”
2. To ascertain the prominence and attention accorded employees issue in “This Week”
3. To determine the direction of coverage of employee issues in the house journal.
4. To assess the impact of “This Week” on communication climate of employees of EPNL.

**1.4 Research Question**

1. What is the frequency of publication of ENPL’s house journal –“This Week”?
2. What is the degree of?
3. Is the direction of coverage of employee issues in “This Week” building a good communication climate for employees of EPNL?
4. To what extent has “This Week” impacted on the communication climate of employees of EPNL?

**1.5 Significance of the Study**

Unarguably, house journal is a potent tool for effective internal communication, which is a major concern of employee relations dimension of public relations and can determine communication climate. This research, having explored and given illuminating perspectives on “This Week” (the house journal of EPNL), first and foremost, is hoped to improve the communication climate of employees of the company, and those of similar organization through the effective use of house journals. The result of the study will go a long way in improving the content of “This Week” vis-à-vis employee issues, thus making the house journal attain a two-way communication channel status, and not a management unidirectional flow organ.

This work shall be a strong reference material to students of Communication Arts and Mass Communication especially in the aspect of public relations. The findings of this study shall also constitute a sound resource material for public relations consultants and scholars interested in the fast growing field of public relations in Nigeria and the world at large.

But generally, the study will give insights on how credible, house journals can be in aiding the performance of employee relations function in particular, and public relations practices as a whole.

**1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

This work is studying the impact of the coverage of “This Week” on the communication climate of only those employees of EPNL in Port Harcourt Office. Though the same newsletter is circulates to other EPNL’s employees in Lagos and Abuja offices, and even employees of TUPNI, this study is limited to the non-management staff of EPNL, Port Harcourt, and the content of “This Week” for a period of one year: July 2007-July 2008.

**1.7 Limitation of the Study**

I encountered some difficulties searching for past editions of the newsletter since the public relations department had just been moved from its old location to the main office.

Again, the person in charge showed non-chalant attitude in attending to me.

I equally encountered difficulties to even gain access to the company premises because of the tight security owing to the high rate of militant activities in Port Harcourt and Niger Delta as a whole.

**1.8 Brief History of EPNL**

The Nigerian, Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL) is one of the two subsidiaries that carry out upstream activities of the new total. The other subsidiary is Total Upstream Nigeria Limited (TUPNL). The new Total was created through two successive mangers-the first when the former Total joined with Belgian Oil Company, Petrofina to form Totalfina in 1999, and the second when Totalfina combined with French Oil Company Elf Aquitaine in 2000 to create TotalfinaElf.

On May 6, 2003 the group adopted the new name of Total. The new company reflects the prestigious Franco-Belgian oil and gas heritage that dates back to the 1920s. Total is one of the world major oil and gas group with activates in more than 130 countries. Its 95,000 employees put their expertise to work in every part of the industry-exploration and production of oil and natural gas, refining and marketing, gas trading and electricity. Total is working to keep the world supplied with energy today and tomorrow. The group is also first rank player in chemicals.

Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL) was incorporated under the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in May, 1962.

The group is also present in the gas utilization programme of the country through two other subsidiaries: Total LNG Nigeria Limited with 15% equity in Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG), and Brass Holding Company Limited holding 17% shares in the Brass LNG project.

The main activities include exploration, development and production of oil and gas while contribution to the development of communities where it operates and their neighbours. In collaboration with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and representatives of government and local’s communities, the company provides skill development for youths, scholarship awards, upgrades of educational infrastructure, water supply, electricity, health, roads, income generating project and agriculture.

The cooperation between the company, government, local communities and NGOs is ongoing and more projects in line with its new vision on sustainable development will be undertaken in the coming years to ensure sustainable development of the host communities.

The Nigerian operations are carried out in joint venture and exploration partnerships with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Shell, ENI, Patrobas, ExxonMobil, Chevron Texaco, NEXEN, South Atlantic Petroleum, CNOOC, ConociPhilips, CONOIL, the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (NLNG) and the Brass LNG Limited.

With over 2000employees (as at the first quarter of 2008) and office in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt, the group is making remarkable contribution to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Ongoing development projects include: AKPO, USAN, UKOT, Nkarika, OML 100 Long Term, and non-operated ventures such as Bonga development operated by SNEPCO, a Shell subsidiary OML 136, operated by Connil and OPL 247, operated by Chevron. This is besides investment in new gas and power project such as LNG Train 6 and possibly Train 7, Brass LNG IPP project and OML 58 upgrade.

The continuing investment of the group in Nigeria demonstrates its technological capabilities and the huge confidence it has in the future of Nigeria.

The current MD/CEO of EPNL is Mr. Jacques Marraud Des Grottes. Other are: Dr Kinsley Ojoh, GM GSR; Mr. Peter Igbinovia, GM HRIC; Michael Beauchamp, Career Advisor GSR; Jean Jacques Guibaud, Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Corporate Communities, Total. DMDs in all the department is made up of units, and the person in charge of a unit is called “head”.

Apart from the fact that employees of EPNL are scattered around Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt offices, there are also those employees whose job development only revolve around offshore drilling and construction and may never visit the office for over six month or thereabout. Yet this set of employees also need to be kept abreast of development in the different office of the company, just as those “Perpetual” office staff also long to know about events in the field. This necessity justifies the need to float an effective house journal for employees of EPNL. This gives birth to “This Week”.

**1.9 Definitions of Term**

Even though some words and terms used may be of everyday usage, they need further operational definitions in the context they should be used and should be understood in this work to guard against inadvertent distortion and ambiguity in comprehending their meaning. The word and terms are:

**1.9.1 Impact:** In this context, it is simply contributions-how it enhances.

**1.9.2 Communication:** This means the extent of interaction relationships and exchange of ideas and information in both verbal and written message.

**1.9.3 Communication Climate:** This refers to the level of freedom of expression and the prevailing atmosphere of relationships, and the manifest effect of communication situations, as well as the direction and pathways of information flow. Here both formal and informal communication situation and the dimension of communication are relevant.

**1.9.4 Employees:** This strictly stands for the non-management staff of EPNL, Port Harcourt.

**1.9.5 This Week:** This refers to the house journal of EPNL to its employees.

**1.9.6 EPNL:** It is an acronym for Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited.

**1.9.7 TUPNI:** It is an acronym for Total Upstream Nigeria Limited.

**1.9.8 Subsidiaries:** Companies that make up the Total Group: (EPNL AND TUPNI).

1.9.9 **Total:** The parent company of Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL) and Total Upstream Nigeria Limited (TUPNI).