

# Are perceptions of organizational communication color-blind? A race comparative through a Chaos Theory Lens



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## ABSTRACT

*With the global trend to prioritize tailoring communication strategies to meet the ever-changing diverse workforce, the study reveals a more nuanced reality. While much focus is placed on addressing communication differences, this paper's position is that not enough focus is on our basic human need to communicate. This paper aims to evaluate whether certain aspects of the flow of information and communication are racially shared perceptions. Furthermore, through a Chaos Theory lens, evaluate the influence of managerial and organizational control mechanisms on various internal communication perceptions. A quantitative method was adopted, and data was collected from 63 non-management respondents in an automotive group in Kwa-Zulu Natal, by a closed-ended 5-point Likert scale. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify racially shared and divergent perceptions of organizational communication and the statistical significance. Key findings conclude that the free and accurate flow of information is a shared perception, regardless of race, and thus, a basic human need. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the significant influence managerial and organizational control mechanisms have on aspects of organizational communication, and challenges current academic positions that similar race dyads experience higher levels of trust. Finally, the paper concludes that the significant negative perception to control mechanisms, such as informal idea-sharing processes, flexible communication between levels, and active participation in SOPs and policy development, is a racially shared perception.*

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## Introduction

Communication is innate and embodies the basic need to connect, interact and exchange knowledge with others. As a fundamental human ability, one school of thought is that communication goes beyond diversity factors such as culture, race and gender (Greenberg, 2004). The standpoint of communication theories, is that information is the basic requirement in order for successful communication to occur, and information exchange is widely recognised as the first step in communication. Therefore, access to information and the flow of information can be seen as a shared, human expectation – regardless of diversity factors, as hypothesised by this paper.

From an organizational context, communication is the lifeblood of an organization. Since communication is by its very nature "culturally bound," communication between staff and management is a dynamic process of interpreting and sharing information that brings with it inevitable changes that directly impact organizational dynamics (Kazeroony, 2016; Silungwe, 2014). Internal communication is the driving factor that manages emergent change and is therefore, the lifeblood of a dynamic organization.

However, internal communication and the flow of information is greatly influenced by control mechanisms such as organizational policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and managerial practice. Effective information transmission and management require these mechanisms to adapt as communication changes, to meet the demands of a culturally diverse workforce and an ever-changing environment. Current ongoing discussion amongst scholars allude to organizations still using traditional approaches to internal communication from a command-and-control approach (Ruck & Yaxley, 2013). It is only a natural human response, and

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more specifically, a management response, to exert more control when facing perceived chaos and change, and as this paper hypothesizes, has a direct impact on organizational communication perspectives.

Furthermore, organizations are embracing complicated organizational and management strategies and processes to address workforce challenges and changes. Added to this is the pressure, both locally and internationally, to improve diversity and inclusivity practices in a workforce that sees management having their focus constantly shifted. According to a report by Deloitte (2021), an estimated US\$7.5 billion was spent on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) training worldwide in 2020, and a projected US\$15.4 billion will be spent in 2026. Whilst, diversity and inclusion agenda is of critical importance, the paper hypothesizes certain areas of organizational communication are racially shared perceptions, and thus, organizations must first identify and develop agreed expectations in communication, prioritising expectations that are shared, regardless of diversity factors.

Although there is a myriad of literature on diversity within the context and central function of internal communication in underpinning organizational success, there are few studies that focus on its impact as a universal process where priority is given to shared communication expectations. Thus, ongoing empirical research is needed to refocus communication ideologies to the fundamental principles of communication, and to avoid unnecessary complexities in an already dynamic and complex environment. The foundation for addressing diversity expectations and incorporating them into a more comprehensive organizational communication plan, is established by this knowledge

In achieving the aims of the paper, the paper surveyed non-management respondents from a South African automotive group between 2022-2023, and employed a quantitative research design method. The study used an interviewer-administered survey to collect data. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the study, including median, mode and interquartile range (IQR). Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to draw inferential statistics to improve the reliability of the data by measuring statistical significance. The questionnaire was designed to cover concepts of information flow and control mechanisms, including management control and control via organizational policies, processes, and procedures. The questions were also developed in relation to the Chaos Theory, providing a comprehensive conceptual framework for investigating management and communication dynamics.

Given the importance of communication and flow of information as a basic human need according to certain scholars (Kaye, 2017; Ruck & Yaxley, 2013; UNESCO, 2009), its plausible to hypnotize that communication should be the fundamental focus within any organization. Based on the existing literature, and theoretical considerations, this study hypothesizes that in considering access to information and communication a basic human need, that certain aspects of internal communication are shared expectations, regardless of race. Furthermore, that against the framework of the Chaos Theory, that free-flowing information and autonomy are equally shared expectations.

The remainder of the study is organised as follows: the literature review will present the theoretical background, focusing on communication as basic human need. Thereafter, the literature review will present the conceptual framework of the study, focussing on internal communication through a Chaos Theory lens. Thereafter, the study will present the study's research methods. The study will then present the findings, discuss these findings and finally, offer conclusions.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review serves as a basis for theoretical reasoning by presenting an overview of the existing literature on organizational communication dynamics. Furthermore, the paper will present the conceptual framework that incorporates theory and practical insights to enhance the understanding of the subject.

## **Conceptual Background and Hypothesis Development**

### **Communication as a basic human need**

UNESCO (2009:9) states that it is a "universally acknowledged principle that information is an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights." Whether through spoken words, emails, or nonverbal cues, communication represents our basic need to connect, share, and exchange information with others. A report by the United Nations further emphasizes the importance of the free flow of information, and considers the "free flow of information as a foundation for every free and democratic society" (Kaye, 2017:14). As an evident universal human need, it is the position of this paper that it surpasses race-specific considerations.

Information exchange has been generally accepted to be the first step in the communication process. People exchange ideas, information, or messages during this initial stage, setting the stage for a later, more complex communication exchange. Communication, then includes the interpretation and understanding of the message. From a Chaos Theory and systems thinking perspective, living systems require exchanges and interactions in order survive. The energy required for these exchanges and interactions is in the form of information that precedes communication (Montuori, 2011; Twente, 2003). Without information exchange, or the free flow of information, communication cannot occur. Consequently, the unhindered exchange of information becomes crucial.

Studies have repeatedly shown that communication is a basic human need that is necessary for building relationships, resolving disputes, and carrying out daily tasks (McLeod, 2018; Trenholm, 2020). The tendency for information control, presents a significant problem due to the dynamics of communication, especially in organizational situations. There is a tendency in many managerial contexts to control the flow of information, which in turn controls the flow of communication, subsequently, impeding the interchange of knowledge. Flower (1993:51) suggests that modern managers are under the belief that information needs to be “fed to people in little doses”. Thus, managers attempt to use information as power to exert control. The notion of information control is further reinforced by organizational structures, processes, policies, and management hierarchy. The control of information, and the subsequent control of the policies, procedures and processes that inform the level of autonomy, holds significance from the perspective of the internal communication through a Chaos Theory lens, especially within diverse workforces.

With communication challenges being considered as major hindrances to an effective, diverse workforce, internal communication becomes the nexus (Deloitte, 2022). In order to navigate the intricacies inherent to a diverse workforce, it becomes important to not only define internal communication within this context, but to furthermore, understand the complex interaction. This term contributes to our knowledge of the complex interactions between organizational communication processes, and the difficulties presented by workforce diversity. Acting as both a strategic lens for nuanced understanding, and a point of alignment with the Chaos Theory.

Successful adaptation in diverse workforces that are always evolving requires effective communication. It promotes cooperation, understanding, and communication between individuals with various backgrounds and perspectives. Systems theories, which are essential for managing change in these many contexts, provide insights from systems thinking that enable us to comprehend the intricacies of human interactions within these dynamic organizational systems. Communication and thus, information exchange, and the flow of information, is the key factor that influences these dynamics in a complex system. According to Levy (1994:168), the “Chaos Theory points to the importance of developing guidelines and decision rules to cope with complexity, and of searching for nonobvious and indirect means to achieving goals”. As the lifeblood of an organization, these guidelines and decision rules should be informed by internal communication that is clearly defined within the context of diverse, emergent organizations.

As academic discourse debates on the definition of internal communication, three basic dimensions become apparent in the prevailing consensus (Frank & Brownell, 1989). First and foremost, communication inside organizations is acknowledged as a transactional process where parties exchange information. Furthermore, communication is between individuals and/or groups at various levels within an organization. This implies that communication should not be a top-down process but rather a symmetrical, interrelated and interdependent process between the various levels within an organization. Lastly, the fundamental goal of internal communication is made clear by its function to co-ordinate day-to-day activities. Within the context of managing dynamic organizations, emergent change is a constant, and happens in real-time, making the co-ordination of day-to-day changes within internal communication paramount (Liebhart & Garcia-Lorenzo, 2010).

A recurring subject in this conversation is the importance of information flow as the fundamental element supporting both organizational and individual dynamics, and equally the control of information through control mechanisms. According to VanCuilenburg et al. (1998:98) “for management, information is *conditio sine qua non* [a necessary condition]...information must reach the court (person or group) when appropriate and necessary. Otherwise, the information loses its value”.

*H1: The flow of information is a shared perception among employees, regardless of race.*

*H2: Regardless of race, certain aspects of the flow of internal communication are shared perceptions*

### **Organizational and managerial control mechanism**

Control mechanisms have a significant impact on how information flows through an organization, affecting not just how information is disseminated but also how basic human communication needs are met. These control mechanisms, which can take the form of management oversight, hierarchical structures and organizational policies and processes. According to Pipaş and Bakri (2019), managers spend approximately 60% - 80% of their time communicating, and thus, an organizations success depends on how these managers can send a message with maximum efficiency. It is critical to understand that a fundamental human desire for communication is at risk when control systems govern the flow of information.

Dealing with changes and complexities within an organization, is often met with managers trying to exert more control through controlling the access and the flow of information in order to manage the “chaos” (Damayanthi et al., 2021; Wheatley, 1993). From the viewpoint of the Chaos Theory, the strategic use of information to drive behavioral patterns is highlighted when examining managerial reactions to complexity within a dynamic organizational framework.

In the context of the Chaos Theory, which includes concepts like the butterfly effect, bifurcation, fragmentation, and interdependence, information becomes essential, and can act as a catalyst to cause radical changes in the behavior of an organization. Internal communication is essential for negotiating the intricate and frequently unpredictable structures of organizational systems in the framework of the Chaos Theory. Remarkable shifts can be sparked by effective communication, since minor gains in information exchange can result in increased creativity and productivity, otherwise known as the *butterfly effect* (Singh & Singh, 2002). Strong internal communication supports the interdependence of diverse organizational components and unites departments, promoting

cohesiveness and minimizing fragmentation. Ultimately, the complicated interplay between varied components, and the necessity on information flow to navigate complexity inside organizational systems, are highlighted by the principles of the Chaos Theory.

However, the central idea and focus of the Chaos Theory is self-organization - a dynamic process by which systems, propelled by an unrestricted flow of information, gravitate towards resilience instead of stability. Otherwise known as *the edge of chaos* or “transition between order and chaos...that buys you exquisite control” (Hudson, 2000:224). The edge of chaos is not a static state, and with information and subsequent, interaction driving this dynamic process, the flow of information is critical for adaptation, including any control mechanism that impacts that flow. The emphasis on self-organization highlights the transformative potential present in the organizational environment, where information flows and is disseminated in ways that significantly influence the system's ability to adapt. It becomes clear that the system's natural capacity to organise and adapt to changing conditions is hampered by control mechanisms over the flow of information. Simply put, information is what living systems need in order to transform themselves, and if you want to place an organization at the edge of chaos where it is most adaptive, you need a free flow of information (Flower, 1993).

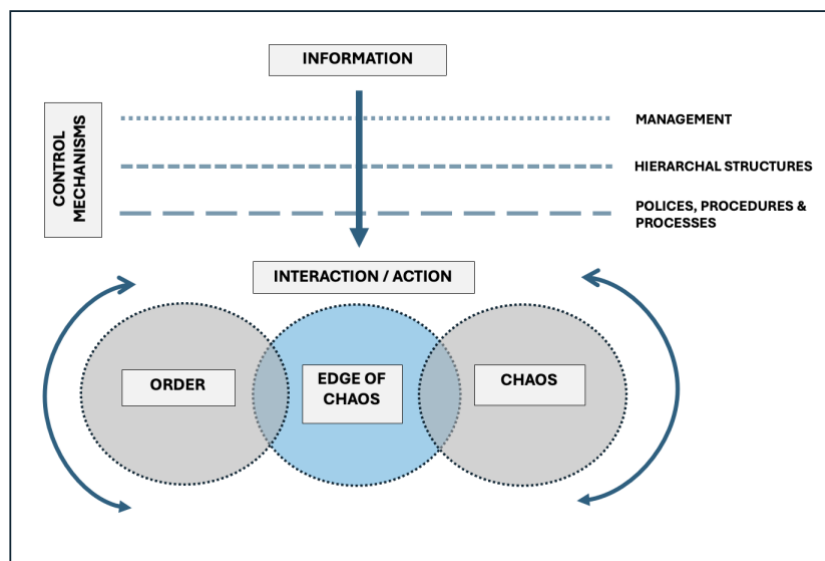
In addition to management control, organizational structure appears as a critical component of influence in control mechanisms within organizational dynamics. The way in which an organization's structure and hierarchical framework are set up essentially determines the methods of operation, including the structures, processes, policies and procedures that inform the flow of information and communication directives (Griffin, 2022). Although considered as a paradox, the Chaos theory is the balance between order and chaos, and as such, order in the form of organizational structure, policies and procedures is still a necessity. Widhiastuti (2012) asserts that organizational structure and communication cannot be separated and are inextricably linked. However, for communication to occur, there needs to be a free flow of information that subsequently is influenced by these control mechanisms.

Depending on the nature of the organization and its demands, organizations employ various kinds of organizational structures including, matrix organizations, open boundary structures, vertical structures (functional and divisional), centralized mechanistic or decentralized organic structures (Budros, 2000; de Kinderen & Kaczmarek-Heß, 2020; Killingsworth & Eschenbacher, 2018; Lim & Moon, 2021). Each of these structures has a unique framework for how information flows. However, all these authors concur that organizational structures determines the degree of interaction, reporting lines, and communication channels and processes.

Further to organizational structures determining the flow of information, is the influence organizational policies, procedures and processes have on the flow of information. The established channels and guiding principles that facilitate the management, distribution, and accessibility of information are provided by these structured frameworks. Procedures provide detailed instructions for specific tasks, processes establish organized workflows, and policies establish general guidelines and norms. According to Van Tonder (2004) management often focus too much on these technical elements, and neglect the human element of communication and essentially undermine the human agenda and basic human need for information in order to facilitate communication towards self-organization.

*H3: Organizational control mechanism substantially influences the perception of the flow of information and communication.*

### Conceptual framework



**Figure 1:** Influence of control mechanisms on the flow of information and an organizations ability to position itself at the edge of chaos; *Source:* Author, 2023

As illustrated by figure 1, the edge of chaos is the dynamic balance between order and chaos, and is driven by the flow of information and, subsequent interaction. Langosco (2012) asserts that an organization does not just automatically remain at the edge of chaos, it takes effort (interaction) and energy (information) to remain there. With control measures, such as management control, hierarchal structures and policies, processes and procedures, essentially controlling the flow of information, which ultimately determines the level of interaction, it can significantly impact the ability of an organization to remain at the edge of chaos. Furthermore, bringing into question the impact of diverse perspective in interpreting and processing the information and thus impacting the interaction and subsequently the ability to remain at the edge of chaos.

Added to this, is the how these control mechanisms, affect employees access to information. With information flow and autonomy being closely related, it reflects the basic human desire for communication and knowledge within an organizational setting. From a Chaos Theory perspective, autonomy is needed to self-organize and remain at the edge of chaos. Jantsch (1980:40) proposes that “the more freedom in self-organization, the more order,” reinforcing the impact employee autonomy has on achieving self-organization.

## **Research and Methodology**

The focus of the study was specifically on evaluating race perceptions on internal communication and autonomy, to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of communication flow, and the application of control mechanisms in the context of the organization. Using a quantitative research method, and a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, the target population included management and non-management staff at an automotive group in South Africa. The study consisted of 89 respondents, which included both management and non-management staff. However, for the purpose of this study, a subset of 63 respondents was used, all of whom were non-management staff. The sample size of 63 was determined by maximum variation sampling and was used to add value and diversity to the study and reveal common patterns of the target population (Siegle, 2021). The sample consisted of 73% males and 27% females. Among these respondents, 39.7% identified as black, 34.9% Indian, 20.6% white and 4.8% colored.

### **Data collection**

A survey conducted by interviewers was used to gather data. The questionnaire's questions were carefully designed to include important concepts, including information and communication flow, and control mechanisms (such as management control and control through policies, processes, and procedures). These questions were also deliberately developed in relation to the Chaos Theory, which offered a thorough framework for investigating the complex dynamics of management and communication from a race perspective.

A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree", and 5 being "Strongly Agree," was used in the survey to record respondents' opinions. Utilizing descriptive statistics, such as the mean, median, and interquartile range (IQR), the data was compiled to identify trends and insights. Thereafter, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to look at how different racial groups' perceptions differed from one another to the same set of questions. The non-parametric test was selected due to its capacity to evaluate variations in medians between independent groups, particularly in situations where parametric test assumptions are not fulfilled, hence augmenting the validity of the results and testing the papers hypotheses (Ostertagová et al., 2014).

### **Data analysis**

Jamovi software, which offers tools for statistical analysis, was used to do the data analysis. Descriptive statistics and the Kruskal-Wallis test were used to look at how responses varied throughout racial groups. Since the Kruskal-Wallis test does not assume a normal distribution of the data, and may be used to compare medians across many groups, it proved especially valuable in this situation.

### **Reliability and validity**

The study's reliability was enhanced by the development of the questionnaire and the application of recognized statistical techniques. The Kruskal-Wallis test were used to make sure the study was reliable, and gave a valid evaluation of the variations in perceptions among various racial groups.

The researcher acknowledges the study's limitations with regards to the cross-sectional approach that can restrict the capacity to infer casual links by capturing data at a particular point in time. Furthermore, the generalizability of the results could be impacted by the sample size and the demographic makeup of the respondents.

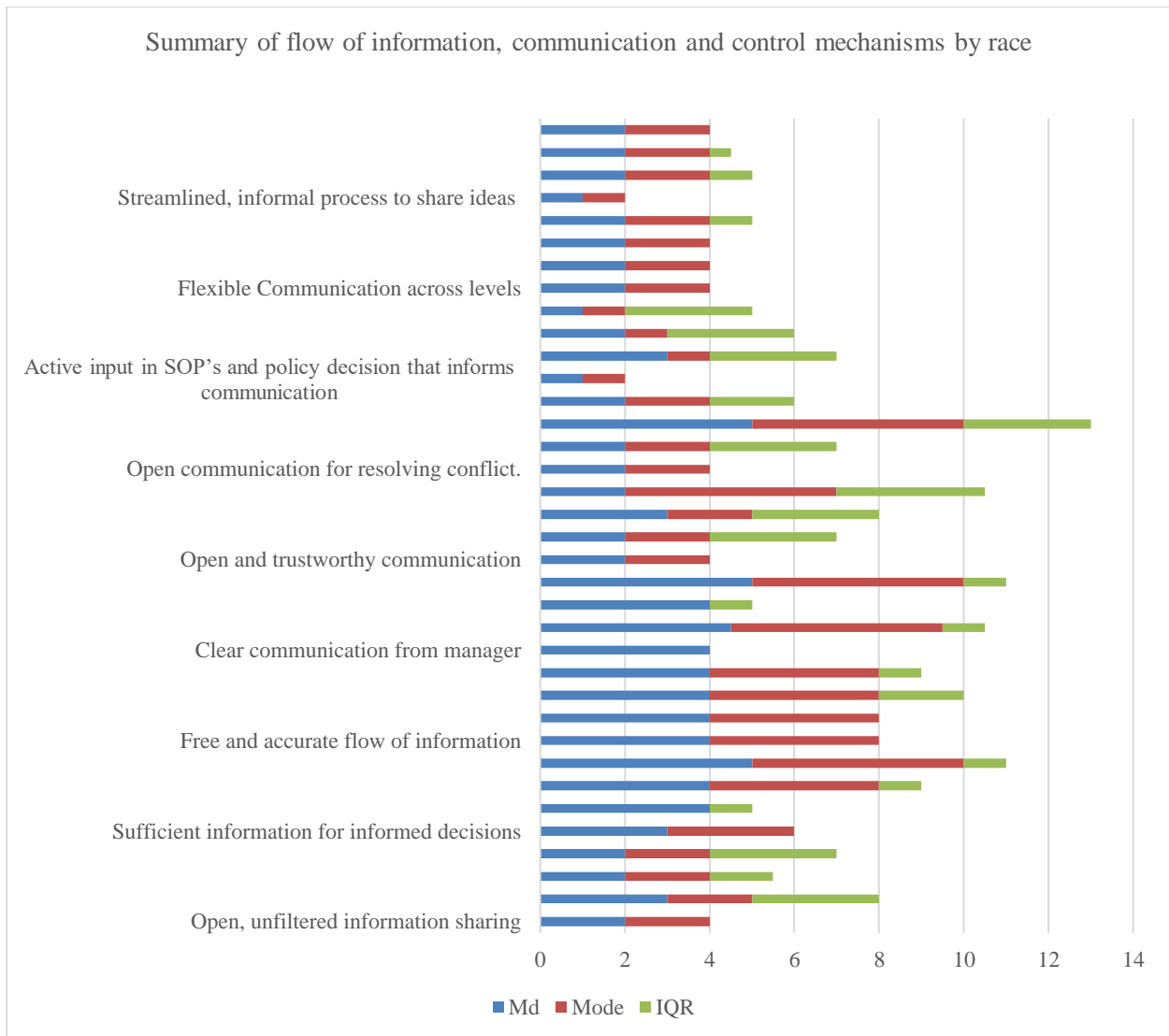
## **Findings and discussions**

### **Descriptive statistics**

This study sought to investigate how individuals from diverse racial groups perceived information and communication flow, as well as the influence of organizational control measures.

**Table 1:** Descriptive summary of flow of information, communication and control mechanisms by race

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>N=</b>	<b>Md</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>IQR</b>
<b>Flow of information</b>	Open, unfiltered information sharing	Coloured	3	2	2	-
		Indian	22	3	2	3
		White	13	2	2	1.5
		Zulu	25	2	2	3
	Sufficient information for informed decisions	Coloured	3	3	3	-
		Indian	27	4	5,4	1
		White	13	4	4	1
		Zulu	25	5	5	1
	Free and accurate flow of information	Coloured	3	4	4	-
		Indian	22	4	4	0
		White	13	4	4	2
		Zulu	25	4	4	1
<b>Flow of Communication</b>	Clear communication from manager	Coloured	3	4	5,4,3	-
		Indian	22	4.5	5	1
		White	13	4	5,4	1
		Zulu	25	5	5	1
	Open and trustworthy communication	Coloured	3	2	2	-
		Indian	22	2	2	3
		White	13	3	2	3
		Zulu	25	2	5	3.5
	Open communication for resolving conflict.	Coloured	3	2	2	-
		Indian	22	2	2	3
		White	13	5	5	3
		Zulu	25	2	2	2
<b>Control mechanisms</b>	Active input in SOP's and policy decision that informs communication	Coloured	3	1	1	-
		Indian	22	3	1	3
		White	12	2	1	3
		Zulu	25	1	1	3
	Flexible Communication across levels	Coloured	3	2	2	-
		Indian	22	2	2	0
		White	12	2	2	0
		Zulu	25	2	2	1
	Streamlined, informal process to share ideas	Coloured	3	1	1	-
		Indian	27	2	2	1
		White	13	2	2	0.5
		Zulu	25	2	2	0



**Figure 2:** Summary of flow of information, communication and control mechanisms by race

The findings from the above table 1 and Figure 2, present the various questions related to organizational communication from a race perspective, specifically presenting those perceptions that are shared, and those that are divergent.

Information and idea sharing is one of the questions where data revealed a shared perception across the different racial groups under study. The data indicates that many racial groups have a similar perception on how much information and ideas are shared within the company under study. While the Colored group has a median of 1, the Indian, White, and Zulu groupings all have medians and modes of 2. All groups report a median and mode of 4, indicating a high degree of alignment for the accurate and free flow of communication.

In contrast, there are several questions where the races under study perceptions are significantly divergent and indicate varying levels of satisfaction. There are notable differences between racial groupings when it comes to the question of whether there is enough knowledge to make an informed decision. The Indian group has greater variability (IQR=1) with a higher median of 4 and modes of 5 and 4, whereas the Colored group has a median and mode of 3. With a median and mode of 4, the White group similarly exhibits an IQR of 1. The Zulu group has the highest median and mode of 5, with an IQR of 1. These variations show how different the groups' levels of satisfaction are. Open and unfiltered information sharing reveals a great deal of variation. The racial groups' perceptions of open and unfiltered information sharing differ significantly from one another. The median and mode for the Colored group is 2. With a median of 3 and a mode of 2, the Indian group exhibits considerable variability (IQR=3). Despite having different IQRs (1.5 and 3, respectively), the White and Zulu groups both have a median and mode of 2. These variations show that there is a lack of agreement across the organizations regarding the open and unrestricted sharing of information. These variations in mode and median indicate that the perception of open and unfiltered information sharing is not a shared perception. Clear communication from managers differs as well. Different racial groups have different opinions on managers' ability to communicate well. The median reported by the colored group is 4, whereas the modes are 5, 4, and 3. The Indian group had a median of 4.5 and means of 5 and 4, with a little degree of variability (IQR=1). With a median of 4 and means of 5 and 4, the White group likewise displays an IQR of 1. The Zulu community reports the highest values, with an IQR of 1 and a median and mode of 5. These variations show different

opinions about how clear management communication should be. Divergent perceptions are also seen with open and trustworthy communication. Racial groups' perceptions of honest and reliable communication differ greatly from one another. The median and mode for the Colored group is 2. The median and mode for the Indian group is both 2, and their IQR is 3. The White group has a median of 3 and a mean of 2, indicating substantial variability (IQR=3). The Zulu group reported a median of 2 and a mean of 5, indicating extremely high variability (IQR=3.5). These variations demonstrate sharply differing opinions on this matter. Lastly, the use of open communication in conflict resolution draws attention to divergent perceptions between races. A mode of 2 and a median of 2 are reported by the Colored group. With high variability (IQR of 3), the Indian group also has a median of 2 and a mode of 2. The Zulu group's level of satisfaction is lower but more constant, with a mode and median of 2 and high variability (IQR=2).

Additionally, what is important to note is questions that have high variability between the races under study. These include active input in SOP's and policy decision that informs communication, with high variability with Indian, White and Zulu groups (IQR=3), within the central tendency measure of flow of communication, open and trustworthy communication had high variability with Indian and White groups (IQR=3) and Zulu groups (IQR=3.5). Equally the question on open communication for resolving conflict reveals Indian and Zulu groups having a high variability of IQR of 3 and White a IQR of 1.5. This variety might be explained by the fact that respondents came from five different branches, in addition to variations in individual perspectives. It is possible that each branch has distinct management styles, policies and procedures and communication styles that impact how members of the same racial group view and interact with one another.

### Inferential statistics

The descriptive data above presented an overview of how various racial groups regard different areas of communication within the organization. These observations emphasized both areas of shared and divergent perceptions. However, to further explore the data and statistically confirm whether these observed variations between ethnic groups are significant, the non-parametric approach, the Kruskal-Wallis test, was employed.

**Table 2:** Kruskal-Wallis test results for the flow of information, communication and control mechanisms

Question	$\chi^2$	df	p	$\epsilon^2$
<b>Information and ideas sharing</b>	5.12	4	0.275	0.0813
<b>Sufficient information for informed decisions</b>	11.59	4	0.021	0.1840
<b>Open, unfiltered information sharing</b>	6.24	4	0.182	0.0990
<b>Free and accurate flow of communication</b>	6.73	4	0.151	0.1069
<b>Clear communication from manager</b>	4.84	4	0.304	0.0768
<b>Open and trustworthy communication</b>	12.79	4	0.012	0.2031
<b>Open communication for resolving conflict</b>	11.42	4	0.022	0.1813
<b>Active input on SOP and Policy changes</b>	4.51	4	0.341	0.0728
<b>Flexible Communication across levels</b>	9.55	4	0.049	0.1541

Questions about having enough information to make informed decisions ( $\chi^2 = 11.59$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1840$ ), open and trustworthy communication ( $\chi^2 = 12.79$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.2031$ ), open communication for resolving conflict ( $\chi^2 = 11.42$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1813$ ), and flexible communication across levels ( $\chi^2 = 9.55$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1541$ ) were among the questions that showed significant differences. These findings support the descriptive statistics by pointing some instances in which racial groups' perceptions differ noticeably from one another. On the other hand, non-significant differences were found in questions about sharing ideas and information ( $\chi^2 = 5.12$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.275$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.0813$ ), accurate and free communication flow ( $\chi^2 = 6.73$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.151$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1069$ ), and manager clarity of communication ( $\chi^2 = 4.84$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.304$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.0768$ ).

While the Kruskal-Wallis test results generally align to the descriptive statistics as presented above, there are few questions that the test does not fully validated the descriptive statistics. For example, for the question relating to flexible communication across levels, despite the significant p-value ( $\chi^2 = 9.55$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ,  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1541$ ), there is consistency in the medians and modes among racial groups. The small variation in IQR, especially for the Zulu group (IQR=1), may account for the subtle discrepancy. This demonstrates that their significant shared perceptions between the racial groups despite the Kruskal-Wallis test indicating a substantial difference. Additionally, according to the descriptive statistics there is variability for the questions, open, unfiltered information sharing and active input in SOP's and policies, but the Kruskal-Wallis test does not reveal any significant differences. This implies that there are still noticeable disparities in perceptions within the groups even though the test does not reveal any significant differences.

## Discussion

### The free and accurate flow of information is racially shared perception

Hypothesis one, that the flow of information is a shared perception among employees, regardless of race can be accepted. According to the findings, the free and accurate flow of information is shared perception across race. Given that communication is a basic human

need, according to UNESCO (2009), and that the free flow of information is the foundation for every free and democratic society (Kaye, 2017), access to information is a universally acknowledged principle. Furthermore, with humans, regardless of race, being categorized as living systems, the findings against the backdrop of the Chaos Theory, accept the proposed conceptual framework that living systems require energy in the form of information to exchange and interact (Montuori, 2011; Twente, 2003). Information is what is required for communication to occur and to determine the level of interaction that drives an organizations ability to remain at the edge of chaos.

### **Divergent race perceptions on the flow of communication and trust in cross-race dyads**

However, hypothesis two that posits that regardless of race, certain aspects of the flow of internal communication are shared perceptions, is partially accepted. The descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis test results show that certain aspects of the flow of communication such as clear communication from the manager, open and trustworthy communication and open communication for resolving conflict are not shared by all races. What is interesting to note is that the only race that did not share the same perception on open and trustworthy communication and open communication for resolving conflict, was White respondents who perceived these questions more positively than the rest of the races under study. With management of the organization under study been made up 4% Colored, 46% Indian and 50% white, the findings suggest that trust perceptions on communication are not necessarily impacted by communication from the same or different race. Therefore, the findings from this paper challenge the position of Wells (2001) and Jeanquart-Barone (1993) research, that similar race dyads experience higher levels of trust than cross-race dyads. What is clear from the findings is that there is a definite divergent perception between White respondents and respondents of color (Indian, Black and Colored).

Offering further insight into this finding, a study done by Abdel-Monem et al. (2010) found that respondents of color within a workplace, valued the opportunity to be heard in a receptive atmosphere, which was not a sentiment shared by white interviewees. Cocultural Communication Theory explains that members of historically underrepresented groups, such as women and people of color, may be marginalized due to the dominant groups control of the rules and interpretation that inform communication within the workplace (Orbe, 1996; Orbe, 1998). Given that 50% of management within the organisation under study were white, could be the reason why white respondents had a more positive perception, as it aligns more closely to their expectations. However, further research will need to be explored to understand the causes and influences of perception differences, and if in fact they are historically influenced.

### **The influence of organizational control mechanism on racially shared perceptions of information and communication flow**

Hypothesis three is supported. The findings indicate that organizational control mechanisms influence the perceptions of the flow of information and communication, particularly with regards to open and trustworthy communication and open communication for resolving conflict. All the races under study had shared, negative perceptions with regards to active input in SOP's and policy decision that informs communication (Md=1-3, Mode=1), flexible communication across levels (Md=2, Mode=2), and streamlined, informal process to share ideas (Md=1-2, Mode=1-2). Equally these respondents had shared negative perception of open and trustworthy communication (Md=2-3, Mode=2) and withholding white respondents, open communication for resolving conflict (Md=2, Mode=2). However, clear communication from the manager, sufficient information for informed decisions and the free and accurate flow of information (Md=4-5, Mode=4-5), indicate positive perceptions, suggesting that the perception of organizational control does not have an impact on these communication areas. Research indicates that control methods have a significant impact on internal communication. However, these research studies have either focused on controllability of mediated communication, and the general importance of the free flow of information from a systems and Chaos Theory perspective (Ruck & Yaxley, 2013; Welch, 2012; Wheatley, 1994). Although the current literature supports the findings, the current research is limited in terms of the specific areas and processes that are influenced by control mechanisms.

In further analysing the findings, regardless of race, respondents had unfavourable perception on the control mechanism questions. They also indicated negative perceptions about certain aspects of communication and information flow, notably open, trustworthy communication and open communication to resolve conflicts. This implies that perceptions of organizational communication are directly influenced by some control mechanism. Significant variability were noted for open and trustworthy communication (IQR=3-3.5), open communication for resolving conflict (IQR=2-3), and feedback on SOPs and policy changes (IQR=3). Considering the variety of departments and branches in the sample, varying management styles may be the cause of the variability. To further understand why some communication areas are less impacted by control mechanisms and to analyse communication trends by branch and department, more research is required.

On the other hand, there was minimal variability and a strong negative perception in the questions concerning streamlined, informal idea-sharing processes (IQR=0.5-1) and flexible communication across levels (IQR=0-1). What is important to note is that both these control mechanism related questions, had shared racial perceptions. In its relation to managers' clear communication (IQR=1), and the free and accurate flow of information (IQR=0-2), respondents indicated a positive perception. The researcher posits that this finding indicates a negative perception to organizational control mechanisms that seem to be implemented by head office and not at branch level.

The paradox presented is the negative perception of open, unfiltered information but the positive perception of free and accurate flow of information and sufficient information for conflict. The other posits that while sufficient information involves communicating relevant information, and free and accurate flow of information deals with information that flows without barriers, open, unfiltered information involves the lack of transparency. Supported by the conceptual framework, energy in the form of information is needed for exchange, interaction and thus, communication (Montuori, 2011; Twente, 2003). However, further investigation is required to determine the relevance of what seems to be similar areas of communication but different perceptions.

## Conclusion

It is concluded that the free and accurate flow of information in organizational communication is a shared perception, regardless of race. Proving the papers hypothesis and conceptual literature that information is not only a basic human need and the foundation for a free and democratic society but is the foundation of communication. Although in isolation, this finding is not a new contribution to the field, against the backdrop of the conceptual framework and within context of the paper's other conclusions, this finding holds significant merit.

The paper further concluded that the papers hypothesis that certain aspects of the flow of communication, such clear communication from the manager, open and trustworthy communication and open communication for resolving conflict, was a shared perception was partially confirmed. The hypothesis was supported for three out of the four races examined. However, only the White race group indicated a variation in perception, perceiving these aspects more positively. As presented in the discussion, these findings lean towards the influence of dominant societal structures on marginalized groups. These findings further challenge current academic positions that similar racial dyads experience higher levels of trust when compared to cross-race dyads.

Furthermore, the paper concluded that perceptions of information flow and communication, particularly regarding open and trustworthy communication and conflict resolution, are greatly influenced by organizational control processes. The study revealed that all racial groups had unfavorable opinions on informal idea-sharing processes, flexible communication between levels, and active participation in SOPs and policy development, confirming the hypothesis of the paper and confirmed the relevance of the proposed conceptual framework.

The conclusions are thus, regardless of race, the flow of information as a basic human need, necessitates that it is the foundation from which all organizational communication efforts are derived. The evident impact of managerial and organizational control mechanisms warrants more flexible structures and processes that allows for input from all employees. Thus, in line with the conceptual framework the free flow of information and flexible and inclusive control mechanisms are required to facilitate the process of self-organization, where an organization is at its most adaptive and innovative. The practical implications suggest that managers should prioritize the standardization of the flow of information, since this is a shared perception, enhance transparency, and offer communication skills training for management. Furthermore, considering findings from previous studies which found that underrepresented groups value a receptive atmosphere, focus needs to be on providing platforms for these groups to not only share feedback but to also actively involve all employees the development of policies and procedures. It is therefore recommended, that organizations establish a sub-committee or advisory council made up of employees from diverse backgrounds to provide insight and recommendations to management for the purpose of enhancing communication and understanding between diverse groups and management.

The study was limited to an automotive group in KZN, which may not be generalizable to other industries and other geographic locations. Further research needs to examine the complex dynamic of racial perspectives to certain control mechanisms within the context of communication. This research would further add to the understanding of diverse workforces and the processes and structures that facilitate self-organization.

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