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Informal Communication Culture and Its Impact on University Performance : A Case Study at Ghardaia University

**ثقافة الاتصال غير الرسمي وأثرها على الأداء الجامعي : دراسة حالة بجامعة غرداية**

La culture de la communication informelle et son impact sur la performance universitaire : étude de cas à l'Université de Ghardaïa»

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# **Informal Communication Culture and Its Impact on University Performance : A Case Study at Ghardaia University**

ثقافة الاتصال غير الرسمي وأثرها على الأداء الجامعي : دراسة حالة بجامعة غرداية

## **La culture de la communication informelle et son impact sur la performance universitaire : étude de cas à l'Université de Ghardaïa**

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### **Introduction**

Social organizations have gradually refined their core principles to better structure internal components, resulting in a more sophisticated organizational paradigm. By adopting an appropriate organizational culture, these entities not only strengthen individuals' adherence to organizational principles but also effectively leverage informal communication mechanisms. This strategic integration enables participants to enhance their interactions with the organization, positively impacting both individual and collective performance.

Institutions, recognizing the strategic importance of a clearly defined communicative culture, seek to foster an environment in which every individual finds their place and interacts productively. This effort aims to establish an organizational atmosphere conducive to improving performance at both individual and collective levels.

The process of organizational communication is central to institutional operations, consolidating essential principles dictated by the formal administrative framework. All administrative and organizational directives aim to enhance this communication. However, special attention given to informal communication, due to its inherent benefits, deserves thorough exploration to better understand its specific influence on the organization's communicative culture and, consequently, its overall performance.

As institutions grow and adopt complex structures, a common scenario within large public institutions, challenges emerge in the area of interpersonal communication. These challenges involve relationships between individuals and administration, as well as peer-to-peer interactions. Therefore, individuals frequently resort to informal communication mechanisms to overcome these challenges, significantly impacting their professional performance.

This study aims to deeply explore the culture of informal communication within Algerian universities and analyze its impact on faculty performance, integrating robust theoretical foundations with detailed empirical analysis.

## **1. Research Framework**

Algerian institutions have undergone transitional stages in their organizational management processes, primarily due to the absence of a unified, consistent policy in practice. Individuals joining these institutions bring diverse backgrounds and principles rooted in their social environments, often distinct from formal organizational principles and cultures. Through continuous institutional adjustments, efforts have increasingly shifted towards mechanisms that promote embracing organizational communication's role, as defined by institutional structures, to streamline administrative processes effectively.

These institutions have thus fortified themselves through informal communication, significantly enhancing members' sense of organizational belonging. Nevertheless, the culture of informal communication varies significantly among employees, and its effects manifest differently on their individual performances and the institution's overall efficiency and structural integrity.

University institutions uniquely embody various forms of communication—both formal and informal. The informal dimension arises from cultural behaviors of individuals, particularly professors, who adopt multiple roles within university contexts. These varied roles critically influence their relationships and performance within the organization, necessitating an examination of how informal communication culture shapes institutional effectiveness.

This study therefore seeks to answer the following research question :

What characterizes the culture of informal communication within the institution, and how does it impact individual performance within the institution ?

To further support this investigation, the study explores two subsidiary questions :

1. What specific informal communication values influence institutional performance ?
2. Which informal communication criteria most significantly affect performance commitment within the institution ?

The general hypothesis underpinning this study posits that : The culture of informal communication significantly influences institutional performance. Two specific hypotheses are derived from this assumption :

- Informal communication values directly impact professors' performance within the institution.
- Informal communication relationships significantly influence professors' performance within the institution.

The objectives of this study are threefold :

- To understand informal communication culture and its relationship with institutional performance.
- To identify specific informal communication values among university professors and their interactions with the administration, and examine their effects on performance at the College of Social and Human Sciences, University of Ghardaia.
- To uncover values associated with commitment among groups engaged in informal communication, contributing to organizational stability.

This research is significant in its focus on informal communication culture within university institutions, which are inherently complex. By identifying informal communication values and principles that either facilitate or hinder institutional objectives, the study offers both theoretical insight and practical implications for effective university management.

## **2. Informal Communication Culture in Organizational Contexts**

### **2.1 Culture and Organizational Communication**

Culture encompasses all knowledge, values, and attitudes acquired by individuals, both materially and immaterially, influencing their daily interactions. These cultural elements, passed down through generations, create symbols with distinct meanings, differentiating one group from another. This collective heritage results in behaviors that are widely accepted, internalized, and adhered to, providing individuals with a shared identity and sense of belonging.

Philip d'Iribarne defines culture as "a reference framework for agreed-upon meanings or concepts individuals establish to understand phenomena." He emphasizes that comprehending human behavior within organizations requires examining their cultural context, as behaviors reflect individuals' perceptions and interpretations (Philippe d'Iribarne, 1992, p. 4).

Organizations represent social domains where individuals with diverse perspectives and ideas engage in structured interactions to achieve common goals. Organizational culture comprises values, norms, and rituals established by the organization, guiding individual behaviors and distinguishing the institution from others. Renaud Sainsaulieu emphasizes that organizational culture possesses a unique social and strategic identity, shaping collective and individual practices. It is not merely reflective of its environment but an active component that influences and is influenced by individual behaviors (Philippe d'Iribarne, 1992, p. 46).

Formal organizations establish procedures to fulfill objectives, systematically analyzing and distributing roles and functions. Nevertheless, individuals within organizations also naturally engage in informal interactions driven by personal and social needs, significantly impacting their roles and performance.

Organizational communication, encompassing both formal and informal channels, serves as a crucial mechanism for information exchange, opinion sharing, and task coordination among individuals and management. The culture of organizational communication integrates various principles, beliefs, values, symbolic expressions, and techniques that shape individual interactions, stabilize relationships, and reinforce organizational identity.

## **2.2 Informal Communication in Organizations**

Informal communication culture involves spontaneous, agreed-upon practices (dialogues, alliances, affiliations) within social relationships, guiding individual behaviors and influencing their performance. Ahmed Maher defines informal organization as a spontaneous network of personal relationships established without formal regulation, shaped by shared values and mutual objectives, particularly evident in complex organizations (Maher, 2000, p. 689).

Informal communication, occurring spontaneously among organizational members, facilitates flexible information exchange, alliances, and social cohesion. The Human Relations School, notably Elton Mayo, underscores the significance of informal communication for organizational effectiveness. Organizational behavior emerges primarily from interpersonal interactions, influenced considerably by administrative leadership and group dynamics. Successful organizational management integrates informal communication into formal structures, empowering individuals through participatory

decision-making and shared responsibility (Milad Muhammad Ali Al-Wakwak, 2016, pp. 60–61).

The communication process within an organization involves formal interactions among members based on clearly defined foundations and principles. This structured flow of information and directives, however, naturally leads to informal communication. This latter form is characterized by alliances formed through shared cultural and social affiliations, and by casual interactions guided by mutually accepted values. These interactions significantly influence group dynamics and behaviors in the workplace.

Several key elements define informal communication in organizations :

- **Non-formal Groups** : These are social groups that form spontaneously within organizations, characterized by ongoing, natural interactions. Members assume roles and responsibilities defined by shared group objectives and informal norms.
- **Non-formal Leaders** : Leaders who emerge within these groups due to their influence—rooted in seniority, experience, or cultural factors—rather than formal appointment.
- **Unwritten Rules and Shared Values** : These informal norms guide behavior and interactions within the group and exert significant influence on member actions.
- **Group Consensus** : Informal groups typically reach consensus around shared values and standards regulating their behavior and collective approach to organizational tasks.
- **Informal Communication System** : A decentralized yet structured network of information exchange that reinforces collaboration, cohesion, and group identity (Milad Muhammad Ali Al-Wakwak, 2016, p. 57).

Informal communication also encompasses unwritten principles, shared values, and agreed-upon standards that guide behavior. These collectively adopted informal norms regulate group interactions, influencing organizational activities and objectives, and thus impacting overall performance. This culture, built on tradition and rituals, often guides how members resolve conflicts, share information, and make decisions—sometimes aligning with or challenging formal organizational structures.

Ultimately, informal communication represents a powerful social process, driven by mutual understanding, shared meaning, and unspoken norms that shape individual and collective behavior within the institution.

### **2.3 Organizational Values and Informal Alliances**

Every organization aims to establish values that guide member behavior and ensure optimal use of available resources. These values emerge from organizational culture and help direct behavior toward achieving shared objectives. Mustafa Al-Bahi defines organizational values as judgments based on cultural experience and environmental interaction that shape individual preferences and determine acceptable behavior within the organization (Bin Issa, 2010, p. 80).

These values play a crucial role in guiding interpersonal relationships, shaping decision-making, and supporting collective efforts. When deeply embedded, they become a foundation for the organization's strategic vision, work ethic, and overall functionality.

Formal organizations also inherently provide a context for forming interpersonal relationships, which often evolve into informal alliances. These alliances arise from social objectives, individual needs, and shared values. As conflicts and challenges emerge within the formal system, individuals create alliances to pursue both personal and collective objectives, resulting in fluid, evolving networks within the organization (Khribesh, 2007, p. 250).

These non-formal alliances become a significant source of power and resilience within the organization. Rooted in informal communication and sustained by recurrent interaction, they offer individuals a sense of belonging, identity, and mutual support. Their influence extends to shaping organizational behavior, decision-making processes, and institutional stability.

### **2.4 Organizational Performance and Informal Influence**

Performance within an organization is a key concept in modern organizational studies, often associated with the need to ensure efficiency, productivity, and long-term viability. Performance refers to individual actions and behaviors, recognized and supported by management, and aligned with organizational objectives through training, supervision, and evaluation (Aissa & Dalila Mehiri, 2022, p. 7).

Miller & Romilly define performance as “the reflective measure of an organization's efficiency and effectiveness in utilizing human and financial resources to achieve predetermined goals” (Adai & Falah, 2000, p. 231). It reflects how well tasks are executed in accordance with organizational expectations regarding quality, deadlines, and strategic alignment (Hatim Othman Muhammad, 2005, p. 1).



Ultimately, performance is not only the outcome of formal planning and resources but also of informal dynamics within the institution. Informal communication, group norms, and peer relationships play a critical role in shaping motivation, collaboration, and adaptability in the face of organizational challenges (Milad Muhammad Ali Al-Wakwak, 2016, p. 32).

#### Key Characteristics of Performance Commitment :

1. Commitment to Organizational Policies and Objectives : Adhering to established rules and strategic plans to ensure continuity and the achievement of institutional goals.
2. Commitment to Task Execution : Taking responsibility for the completion of assigned duties in accordance with defined procedures and expectations.
3. Commitment to Timelines : Meeting deadlines and respecting delivery schedules to build trust and support organizational efficiency.

Thus, institutional performance is directly tied to how well individuals align their behavior with organizational goals—a process deeply influenced by informal communication practices, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational values.

### 3. Methodology and Data Collection Tools

#### 3.1 Methodology

Given the nature of the study focusing on informal communication culture and institutional performance, a descriptive methodology was adopted. This method helps in accurately describing the phenomenon within Algerian academic institutions, revealing its dimensions, underlying causes, and characterizing the current state and nature of informal communication among organizational members.

As noted by Mohamed (1986, p. 82), descriptive methodology “aims to provide the researcher with accurate information that depicts the social and human reality and contributes to the analysis of phenomena.” The research applies a quantitative approach to convert descriptive data into comprehensible statistical tables, which are then analyzed to derive insightful conclusions.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Techniques

- Sampling and Study Population : A purposive sample of 50 university professors from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Ghardaia University was selected. This ensured relevance and

minimized bias, allowing for meaningful exploration of informal communication and its effects on performance.

- **Questionnaire :** A structured questionnaire was used to collect detailed data. According to Rashid (2004, p. 108) and Raymond & Van Campenhout (1997), a questionnaire is an effective tool for gathering information from respondents about their social and professional contexts.
- **Scope of Study :** The study was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Ghardaia University, established by Executive Decree No. 248-012 dated June 4, 2012. The research was carried out between March 10, 2023, and May 20, 2023.

## 4. Study Results

### 4.1. Demographic Distributions

The following section presents the demographic profile of the respondents. This background information is essential to understand the diversity in informal communication practices.

Table 1 : Gender Distribution of Sample Individuals

Gender	Repetition	Percentage ( % )
Male	32	64
Female	18	36
Total	50	100

This table shows the gender breakdown of the sample, with a higher representation of male respondents.

Table 2 : Distribution by Seniority

Seniority	Repetition	Percentage ( % )
01 to 05 years	12	24
06 years and above	38	76
Total	50	100

This table reveals the professional experience of participants. A majority of the sample had more than six years of experience.

Table 3 : Distribution by Academic Rank

Academic Rank	Repetition	Percentage ( % )
Assistant Professor	11	22
Lecturer	32	64
Associate Professor	07	14
Total	50	100

The table illustrates the academic hierarchy, with most respondents occupying the position of Lecturer.

Table 4 : Distribution by Specialization

Specialization	Repetition	Percentage ( %)
From the same specialization	31	62
From different specializations	19	38
Total	50	100

This table reflects the disciplinary homogeneity or diversity of the participants, highlighting their professional affinity.

4.2. Hypothesis and Results

4.2.1. Hypothesis 1 Results

This hypothesis explored how informal communication values influence the performance of university professors.

Table 5 : Communication Type Preference by Seniority

Seniority	Formal Only	Informal Only	Both	Total
01 to 05 years	05 (33.33 %)	03 (27.27 %)	04 (16.66 %)	12
06 years and above	10 (66.66 %)	08 (72.72 %)	20 (83.33 %)	38
Total	15 (30 %)	11 (22 %)	24 (48 %)	50

The table illustrates the preferred communication type segmented by professional experience. More experienced faculty favored both formal and informal channels.

Table 6 : Task Performance and Informal Communication Nature

Informal Communication	Carrying out tasks	Refusal to carry out tasks	Procrastination	Total
Favoritism	05 (45.45 %)	09 (47.36 %)	07 (35 %)	24 (48 %)
Specialization	03 (27.27 %)	06 (31.57 %)	03 (15 %)	09 (18 %)
Exchange of Info/ Ideas	03 (27.27 %)	04 (21.05 %)	10 (50 %)	17 (34 %)
Total	11 (22 %)	19 (38 %)	20 (40 %)	50 (100 %)

This table examines task behaviors in relation to the nature of informal communication. Procrastination and task refusal were largely associated with favoritism-based communication.

Table 7 : Nature of Communication Outside Working Hours

Type of Communication	Perform Tasks	Refuse Tasks	Procrastinate	Total
Socio-professional chat	12 (60 %)	03 (37.5 %)	06 (27.27 %)	21 (42 %)
Proposing work solutions	06 (30 %)	04 (50 %)	07 (31.81 %)	17 (34 %)
Frequent work complaints	02 (10 %)	01 (12.5 %)	09 (40.90 %)	12 (24 %)
Total	20 (40 %)	08 (16 %)	22 (44 %)	50 (100 %)

This table shows how informal discussions beyond working hours affect task performance. Socio-professional chats were most common.

#### 4.2.2. Hypothesis 2 Results

Respondents affiliated with informal groups generally reported greater task performance and emotional stability.

Table 8 : Informal Group Belonging and Performance Stability

Group Affiliation	Perform Tasks	Refuse Tasks	Procrastinate	Total
Belonging	15 (68.18 %)	06 (66.66 %)	10 (52.63 %)	31 (62 %)
Non-belonging	07 (31.81 %)	03 (33.33 %)	09 (47.36 %)	19 (38 %)
Total	22 (44 %)	09 (18 %)	19 (38 %)	50 (100 %)

This hypothesis focused on how affiliation with informal groups influences stability and performance.

Table 9 : Type of Discipline and Performance Quality

Type of Discipline	Good	Average	Weak	Total
Commitment to Group Goals	09	10	03	22 (44 %)
Commitment to Institutional Policy	15	11	02	28 (56 %)
Total	24 (48 %)	21 (42 %)	05 (10 %)	50 (100 %)

The table compares performance quality based on commitment to either institutional policies or group values.

Table 10 : Conflict Management and Relationship Quality

Conflict Response Strategy	Good	Bad	Neutral	Total
Alliances	05	07	10	22 (44 %)
Neutrality	07	01	04	12 (24 %)
Rational Decisions	04	01	06	11 (22 %)
Advising Both Parties	03	01	01	05 (10 %)
Total	19 (38 %)	10 (20 %)	21 (42 %)	50 (100 %)

This table explores how informal strategies influence workplace relationships during conflicts with management.

4.3.Empirical Conclusion

Finally, we find that the values and criteria of informal communication have become a communication culture between actors, through which they define their behaviors at work and carry out tasks. This significantly impacts their performance within the institution. One of the values of informal communication that contributes to task commitment is also influenced by the values of informal communication that determine their organizational behaviors and how they perform tasks. Additionally, individuals' relationships are shaped by the values and criteria of informal communication, where they interact based on the extent of their affiliation with the informal group, which in turn affects their performance within the institution.

1. Key Findings :

- The presence of values of informal communication within the college necessitates the need for both formal and informal communication, particularly in the presence of an alliance pattern among the professors. There is also a focus on socio-professional issues and improving their work conditions to enhance their performance.
- The majority of the participants stated that their affiliation with the group through informal communication is driven by favoritism and specialization. This makes them more compliant with the values and criteria set by the informal communication group through their interactions.
- The presence of difficulties in adhering to the criteria of informal communication, often due to certain individuals clinging to conflicts. This leads the workgroup to be dominated by them, without a commitment to forming a collaborative workgroup. However, the

majority stated their commitment to the specified criteria set by the informal communication.

## 2. Practical Recommendations :

- Recognize and integrate informal communication within formal structures.
- Promote balanced organizational culture respecting both formal and informal interactions.
- Initiate team-building, conflict-resolution training, and transparent communication to strengthen cohesion and performance.

By implementing these measures, academic institutions can strategically leverage informal communication to boost efficiency, collaboration, and institutional resilience.

## Conclusion

This study set out to examine the role of informal communication culture within academic institutions, with a focus on Algerian universities. Through a multi-layered analysis combining conceptual exploration and empirical investigation, the research highlighted the powerful yet often overlooked influence of informal communication on institutional dynamics.

At the theoretical level, the study established a foundation rooted in organizational culture, communication typologies, values, performance, and informal alliances. It demonstrated that informal communication is not separate from the formal structure but rather complements or even shapes it. This duality is crucial in understanding how decisions are made, tasks are distributed, and relationships are maintained within academic environments.

Methodologically, a descriptive and quantitative approach was employed to capture the lived experiences and behavioral patterns of professors at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Ghardaia University. The results, drawn from a structured questionnaire and statistical analysis, revealed that informal communication is embedded in daily practices, with its impact evident in performance outcomes, conflict management, and group cohesion.

Informal communication values—such as favoritism, shared specializations, and socio-professional interactions—emerged as key influencers of how professors engage with institutional goals. Importantly, the presence of informal networks, alliances, and group belonging was shown to significantly affect individuals' sense of stability and task commitment.

The integration of empirical findings with theoretical insights leads to a central conclusion : informal communication is not peripheral but central to organizational functioning. Recognizing, managing, and aligning informal communication with formal institutional objectives can enhance overall performance, motivation, and resilience.

This study contributes not only to the academic discourse on organizational communication but also provides practical implications for university administrators seeking to create more cohesive, adaptive, and effective institutions. Future research may further explore the interplay between informal communication and digital environments, leadership styles, or student-faculty relationships within higher education contexts.

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## Abstract

This study examines the influence of informal communication culture on institutional performance within Algerian university settings. Drawing on key concepts such as organizational culture, interpersonal dynamics, informal alliances, and shared values, the research highlights the strategic role informal networks play in shaping professional behavior and institutional cohesion. A descriptive methodology was employed, involving a structured questionnaire distributed to 50 professors at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Ghardaia. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed through statistical tables. The findings show that informal communication—often grounded in favoritism, specialization, and social belonging—significantly affects performance, stability, and task engagement. Furthermore, informal alliances are revealed as mechanisms of both support and conflict within organizational life. The study concludes that informal communication, if integrated thoughtfully into formal structures, can serve as a powerful tool for institutional effectiveness and cohesion.

## Keywords

informal communication, organizational culture, performance, informal alliances, higher education

## المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل تأثير ثقافة الاتصال غير الرسمي على الأداء المؤسسي داخل الجامعات الجزائرية، مع التركيز على الدور الذي تلعبه هذه الاتصالات في تشكيل سلوك الأفراد وتعزيز الانتماء الوظيفي.

انطلقت الدراسة من إطار نظري يركز على مفاهيم الثقافة التنظيمية، التواصل داخل المؤسسات، القيم المشتركة، والروابط غير الرسمية، مما أتاح تسليط الضوء على العلاقات الاجتماعية التي تتكون خارج الهياكل الرسمية.

وقد استخدمت منهجية وصفية مدعومة باستبيان وُزِعَ على خمسين أستاذاً جامعياً من كلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإنسانية بجامعة غرداية. وتم تحليل البيانات بطريقة كمية من خلال جداول إحصائية مفصلة.

أظهرت النتائج أن التواصل غير الرسمي، المدفوع غالباً بالمحسوبية أو التخصيص المشترك أو الانتماء الاجتماعي، يؤثر بشكل مباشر على التزام الأساتذة، أدائهم، واستقرارهم داخل المؤسسة، كما أنه يلعب دوراً مهماً في إدارة الصراعات والعلاقات المهنية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن دمج الاتصال غير الرسمي ضمن الأطر الرسمية يمكن أن يعزز فعالية المؤسسة وتماسكها التنظيمي.

## الكلمات المفتاحية

الاتصال غير الرسمي، الثقافة التنظيمية، الأداء، التحالفات غير الرسمية، التعليم العالي.



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**Résumé**

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Cette étude explore l'impact de la culture de la communication informelle sur la performance institutionnelle au sein des universités algériennes. À travers un cadre théorique articulé autour des notions de culture organisationnelle, de communication interpersonnelle, d'alliances non formelles et de valeurs partagées, la recherche met en lumière l'importance des dynamiques informelles dans la structuration des comportements professionnels. Une méthodologie descriptive, appuyée par un questionnaire administré à 50 enseignants de la Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Humaines de l'Université de Ghardaïa, a permis de recueillir des données quantitatives analysées à l'aide de tableaux statistiques. Les résultats révèlent que les formes de communication informelle – souvent ancrées dans le favoritisme, les spécialisations communes ou les alliances sociales – influencent directement l'engagement, la stabilité, le respect des tâches et la résolution de conflits. En conclusion, la communication informelle apparaît comme un levier essentiel de cohésion et de performance organisationnelle, à condition d'être reconnue et encadrée dans les structures formelles.

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**Mots-clés**

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communication informelle, culture organisationnelle, performance, alliances non formelles, enseignement supérieur