

**Enhancing Organizational Communication Through Appreciative
Inquiry: The Case of East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist
Church Kenya**

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ABSTRACT

Internal communication is a vital component of organizational communication and plays a major role in the realization of an organization's mission because it influences organization members' interpersonal relationships. However, most of the literature on organizational communication understates factors that may impede adequate internal communication practices in complex organizations such as East African Union (EAU). Hence factors such as the organization's culture, or organization members' cultural and educational backgrounds, and gender relations are understated. Furthermore, the literature understates how complex organizational structures such as those of the EAU can hinder or facilitate effective internal communication or the relationships between communication partners. Also, most studies on organizational communication have tended to study organizations from a problem-centric approach, making them more problematic and complex. This study provides an alternative lens for studying organizations by advocating for a positive approach. The study sought to identify existing positive internal communication practices in EAU, and strategies to improve them. Using structuration theory to frame the research questions and 3 phases of appreciative inquiry (AI) cycle, this study established that trust, leader-follower confidence, freedom of creativity and positive gender relations influence the organization's internal communication practices. Enhanced communication in turn improves trust, leader-follower confidence, creativity, and positive gender relations. Study participants identified and proposed strategies, actions and practices to enhance the respective communication drivers. The study found that variables such as the organization's culture, diverse organizational members, organizational leadership, and appreciative inquiry mediate the effect of internal communication in the organization, making the improvement of internal communication in EAU through appreciative inquiry a dynamic, tentative and fluid process. The study showed that structuration theory facilitated organizational learning and change of the organization's communication culture demonstrating therefore that the organization was open to learning. This study contributes to organizational communication studies by demonstrating that enhanced trust, enhanced leader-follower confidence, enhanced creativity, and positive gender relations influence the quality and quantity of internal communication and vice versa. The study also contributes to appreciative inquiry studies by extending it to Christian organizations and also demonstrates that AI can be used flexibly according to a researcher's needs.