



International Journal of Advanced Research

ijar.eanso.org

Volume 8, Issue 1, 2025

Print ISSN: 2707-7802 | Online ISSN: 2707-7810

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-7810>



EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda

Rosemary Tumuhairwe^{1*}, Assoc. Prof. Noel Kansiime, PhD & Dr. Robert Turyamureeba, PhD¹

¹ Bishop Stuart University, P. O. Box 09, Mbarara, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence Email: tumuhairwerosemary43@gmail.com

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/ijar.8.1.3470>

Publication Date: ABSTRACT

11 August 2025

Keywords:

*Internal Communication,
Sanitary Service Delivery.*

The study focused on the influence of internal communication on sanitary service delivery in Lyantonde district. The study was guided by the following objectives: to find out the current state of internal communication, to identify the state of sanitary service delivery, to determine the impact of internal communication on sanitary service delivery, and to identify the key factors influencing internal communication in Lyantonde district. This study adopted a case study research design and qualitative approach with a sample size of 53 respondents. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The data was collected using the interview method and analysed thematically using Atlas TI. The study found that internal communication in Lyantonde District is characterised by a mix of informal digital channels, such as WhatsApp, SMS, and phone calls, and formal methods like memos and circulars, with the former increasingly relied upon due to accessibility and speed. However, serious challenges persist, including inconsistent communication frequency, unclear or contradictory messages, limited feedback mechanisms, and a strong top-down flow that marginalises frontline workers. The study also concluded that sanitary service delivery is marked by systemic inadequacies in infrastructure, accessibility, maintenance, and equity. The study recommended that the district adopt a more integrated and inclusive communication strategy that balances the use of informal digital tools with strengthened formal channels. The study also recommends strengthening internal communication systems by adopting multi-channel approaches that ensure messages reach all relevant staff promptly and clearly, including frontline workers with limited digital access.

APA CITATION

Tumuhairwe, R., Kansiime, N. & Turyamureeba, R. (2025). Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 8(1), 456-476. <https://doi.org/10.37284/ijar.8.1.3470>

CHICAGO CITATION

Tumuhairwe, Rosemary, Noel Kansiime and Robert Turyamureeba. 2025. "Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda". *International Journal of Advanced Research* 8 (1), 456-476. <https://doi.org/10.37284/ijar.8.1.3470>.

HARVARD CITATION

Tumuhairwe, R., Kansiime, N. & Turyamureeba, R. (2025) "Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda.". *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 8(1), pp. 456-476. doi: 10.37284/ijar.8.1.3470

IEEE CITATION

R., Tumuhairwe, N., Kansiime & R., Turyamureeba "Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda.", *IJAR*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 456-476, Aug. 2025.

MLA CITATION

Tumuhairwe, Rosemary, Noel Kansiime & Robert Turyamureeba. "Internal Communication and Sanitary Service Delivery in Lyantonde District, Uganda.". *International Journal of Advanced Research*, Vol. 8, no. 1, Aug. 2025, pp. 456-476, doi:10.37284/ijar.8.1.3470

INTRODUCTION

Internal communication has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from traditional oral and written forms of communication to more complex digital platforms that foster workplace efficiency. The role of internal communication in service delivery has evolved significantly over time, with a growing understanding of its importance in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of services. In the early 20th century, as countries industrialised and urbanised, there was an increasing recognition of the need for better coordination within public organisations to ensure services such as good hygiene and sanitation, healthcare, and education were delivered effectively (Kettunen & Tynjala, 2018).

Historically, the development of sanitary systems and their communication mechanisms can be traced back to ancient civilisations. The Roman Empire is often cited as an early example of sanitary infrastructure, where aqueducts and sewer systems were developed to manage water and waste. However, internal communication within these systems was crucial for the maintenance of these public services (World Health Organization, 2020). The Roman public health officials used written communication and oral directives to manage sewage systems and water sources, a practice that was critical to preventing diseases like cholera. Fast forward to the Industrial Revolution in the 19th

century, which saw the formalisation of sanitation practices, driven by growing urban populations. Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1983) highlights the importance of communication in the early establishment of sanitary services, where government bodies communicated public health guidelines through newspapers and official letters. This was essential in encouraging urban residents to adopt sanitary practices, such as waste disposal and clean water usage.

In Africa, the history of sanitary service delivery has been intertwined with the spread of colonialism, where European powers introduced sanitation systems primarily in urban areas, often overlooking rural populations. The colonial governments used top-down communication strategies to implement sanitation practices, with limited involvement from local communities. Jones (2007) notes that early sanitary systems in African cities were often poorly communicated to the indigenous populations, leading to a lack of proper maintenance and the continued spread of diseases like malaria and cholera. In post-independence Africa, however, the role of communication has evolved. Governments and NGOs have increasingly recognised the importance of community-based communication in delivering effective sanitation services. Internal communication in this context refers to the exchange of information within local governments, between health departments, and with the community to ensure proper service delivery and

public health education (Hounkpatin et al., 2020). These efforts are often supported by regional health organisations, such as the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), which focuses on improving sanitation services and internal communication to ensure that sanitation projects are well-maintained and accessible to all citizens.

In East Africa, historical efforts to improve sanitation have also been marked by the colonial era, where colonial powers established basic sanitation infrastructure in urban centres like Nairobi (Kenya), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), and Kampala (Uganda), often with inadequate communication with the local populations about the importance of sanitary practices. Post-independence, many East African countries faced challenges in maintaining and expanding sanitation services due to limited resources and poor internal communication within governmental agencies. The East African Community (EAC), established in 1967 and later revitalised in the 2000s, has been undertaking regional projects to improve sanitation across its member states. These projects emphasise the role of internal communication within government agencies and local authorities in ensuring that sanitation infrastructure is well-maintained and accessible. In countries like Uganda, Makerere University has been involved in research and advocacy efforts aimed at improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH),

emphasising the importance of effective communication among sanitation stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the public (Kiggundu, 2016). For example, Ugandan government ministries such as the Ministry of Water and Environment and organizations like WaterAid Uganda have employed communication strategies to educate citizens about proper sanitation practices and to ensure the effective delivery of sanitary services.

Purpose of the Study

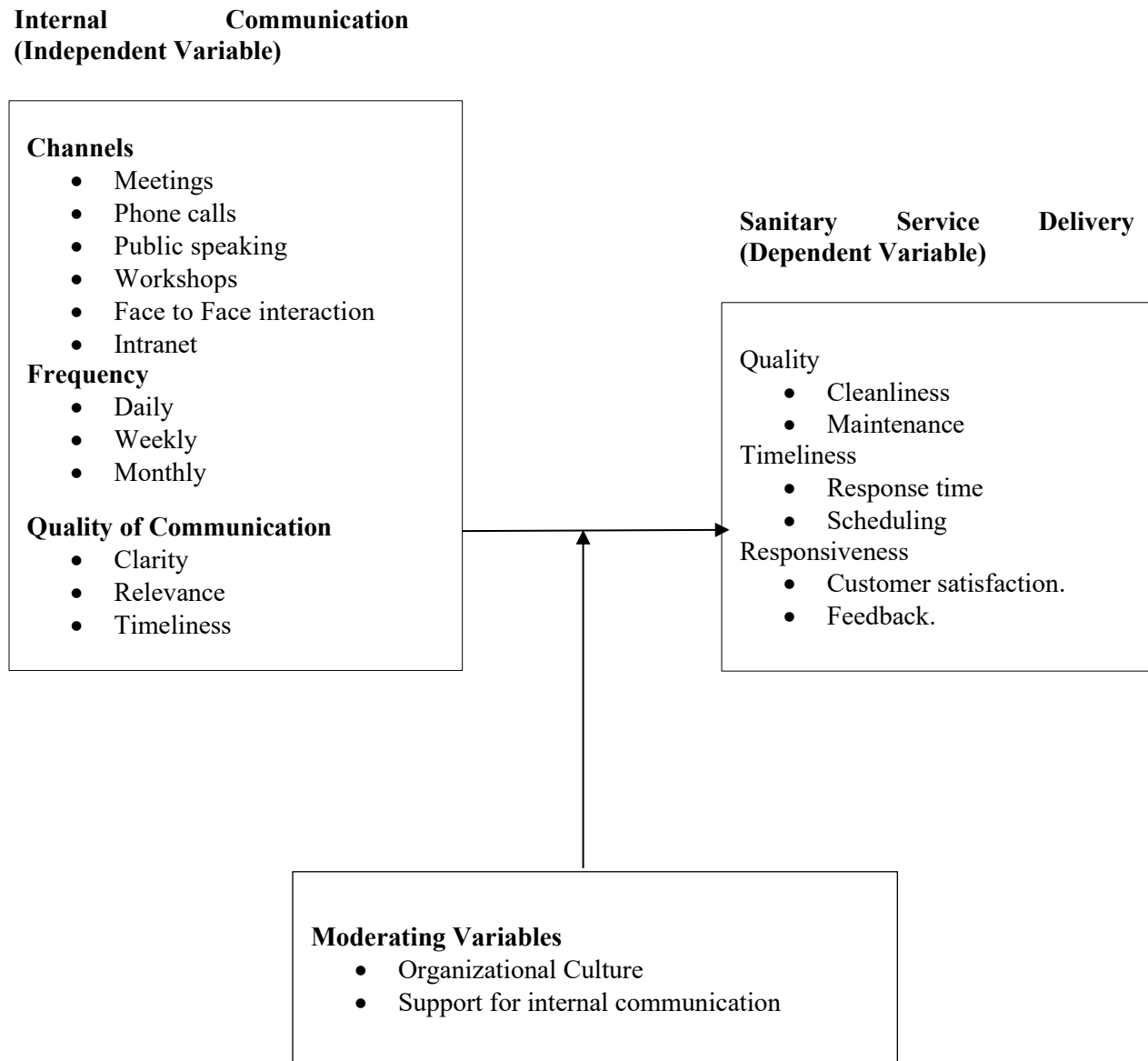
To examine the influence of internal communication on sanitary service delivery in Uganda.

Specific Objectives of the Study

- To find out the current state of internal communication in Lyantonde district.
- To identify the key factors influencing internal communication in Lyantonde district.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between internal communication as an independent variable and sanitary service delivery as a dependent variable. This is illustrated with the aid of the figure indicated below;

Figure 1: The Relationship between Internal Communication as an Independent Variable and Sanitary Service Delivery as a Dependent Variable

Source: Adapted from Katz and Kahn (2021) and modified by the researcher (2025)

Figure 1 above shows a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study considers internal communication as the independent variable and sanitary service delivery as the dependent variable. Internal communication is measured in terms of channels, frequency, and quality of communication.

Sanitary service delivery is dimensionalised as timeliness, accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and quality of the services. The moderating variables are organisational culture, support for internal communication, emphasis on teamwork, and collaboration.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a case study research design that is characterised by studying elements of social changes through a comprehensive description and analysis of a single situation or case, for example, a detailed study of an individual, group, episode, event, or any other unit of social life organisation (Zina, 2021).

Sample Size Determination

The sample size included 53 respondents that including VHTs, health officials, sub-county chiefs, Parish chiefs, CDO'S and political personnel. According to Kothari (2003), the sample size for qualitative research depends on the saturation of data. This means that the researcher interviewed and monitored the respondents until the point of saturation. The actual sample size was determined after data saturation. Furthermore, the study used rich cases that provided in-depth information and knowledge of a phenomenon of interest (Bordens & Abbott, 2014).

Interview Method

This is a qualitative research technique where the researcher asks a set of questions to participants in order to gather detailed information about their thoughts, experiences, perceptions, or opinions on a particular subject. The In-depth interviews were administered to VHTs, Health officials, subcounty chiefs, Parish chiefs, CDO'S and political personnel. The interview method was chosen on the current state of internal communication in Lyantonde district, including its channels, frequency, and quality, level of sanitary service delivery in the district, including its quality, timeliness, and responsiveness, impact of internal communication on sanitary service delivery, including its effects on employee behavior, motivation, and performance, and key factors influencing internal communication in Lyantonde district.

Data Analysis Plan and Management

Data analysis refers to the process of examining, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic content analysis. The Atlas TI software for analysis was used for coding and generating query reports. This entails familiarisation with the material, identification of the codes, searching for themes, revision of the themes, and interpretation. All transcripts were carefully read many times to become familiar with the content. Phrases and sentences that was related to the current state of internal communication in Lyantonde district, including its channels, frequency, and quality, level of sanitary service delivery, including its quality, timeliness, and responsiveness, impact of internal communication on sanitary service delivery, including its effects on employee behavior, motivation, and performance and key factors influencing internal communication in Lyantonde district. The codes that are similar or connected were organised together to form themes. To strengthen research, multiple coding was considered; the researcher will scrutinise all codes and finally use them in the formulation of themes.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher took note of ethical issues surrounding research and took a number of precautions since it included human subjects. The quality of research depended on part on the integrity and objectivity of the researcher as noted by Saunders (2012). This study will take into account the following issues;

The researcher obtained introductory letters from the Research Ethics Committee and Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Innovations, that was taken to the Chief Administrative Officer- Lyantonde district to seek permission to conduct the study. Before conducting interviews, research assistants/translators were hired and trained to

support the data collection process; thereafter, respondents were informed about the research objectives to prepare them to make well-grounded decisions on whether to participate or not. Interviews were held after asking for informed consent from respondents. Each subject had the right to decline or discontinue participating in the research at any time and at will. This gave the respondents confidence to take part and also get permission/consent before conducting the interview to use a tape recorder.

Anonymity: Subjects had the right to conceal information about themselves that they felt was sensitive and private. This was done by not using the names but rather by giving a pseudonym to all participants, as well as random code numbers in the case of interviews. The participants guaranteed the protection of information given, and the data collected was treated with total confidentiality by using number codes rather than names.

Data Protection: The researcher explained and assured the participants that the information given in the study would be used for academic purposes only. Furthermore, each participant's information

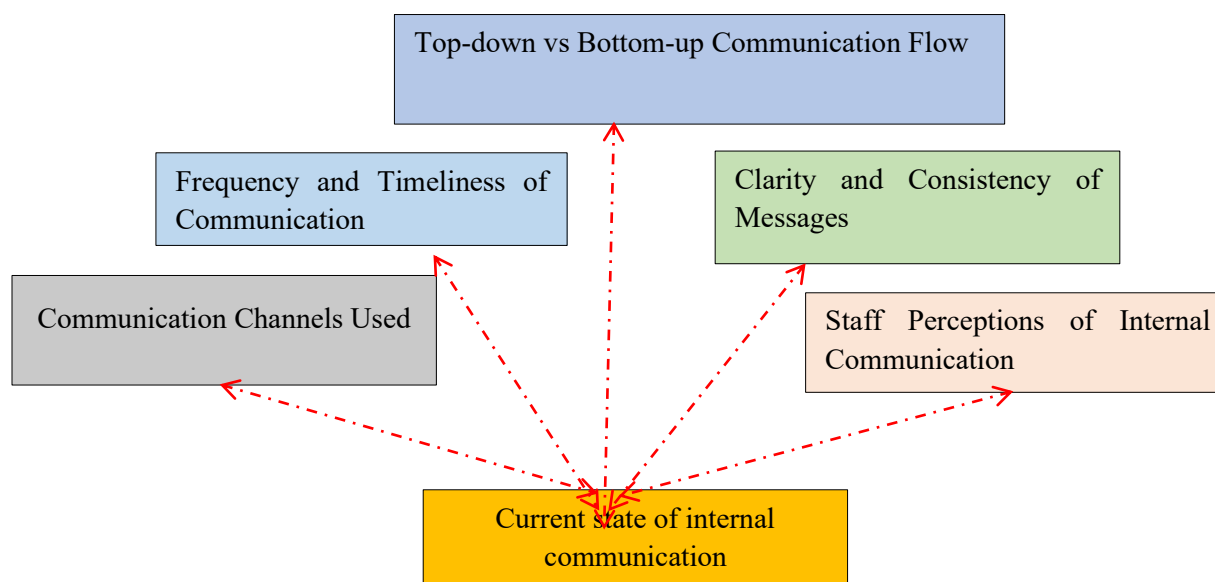
was handled with care and privacy to conceal it from reaching any unauthorised population.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Current State of Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

Effective internal communication is critical for the successful coordination and delivery of public health and sanitation services. In Lyantonde District, where service delivery spans both urban and remote rural areas, the clarity, consistency, and timeliness of internal communication directly influence operational efficiency and community outcomes. This objective seeks to explore the current mechanisms, tools, and practices used by district-level departments, sub-county offices, and frontline workers to share information, coordinate tasks, and respond to public health needs. It also aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and barriers within existing communication structures such as digital access, hierarchical dynamics, and feedback loops, based on the following assertions/verbatim from the key respondents, arranged in sub-themes.

Figure 1: Current State of Internal Communication



Sub-theme 1: Communication Channels Used***Clarity and Consistency of Messages***

The clarity and consistency of communication play a vital role in ensuring effective implementation and public compliance. Clear messaging enables communities to understand the importance of sanitation practices, available services, and their responsibilities. Consistency ensures that these messages are not contradictory or confusing, no matter the source, be it local leaders, health officers, or NGOs. Inconsistencies or vague messages can lead to misunderstandings, reduced community participation, or ineffective service uptake. In Lyantonde District, several respondents noted a lack of clarity and inconsistencies in messages related to sanitary services. This has affected how well communities understand and engage with sanitation programs. The excerpts below illustrate some of these concerns:

In our Kinuuka Sub-county Health Office, nearly all updates from the District Health Officer arrive via a WhatsApp group we have set up. Official memos still exist on paper, but they are seldom circulated; most colleagues haven't even seen a printed circular in months. We hold formal staff meetings only once every three months, which are scheduled by the Chief Administrative Officer and often focus on broad policy rather than day-to-day operations. In practice, real-time coordination, whether it is rerouting a mobile clinic after a vehicle breakdown or sharing the latest cholera alert, happens through quick phone calls and WhatsApp voice notes. Without these informal channels, critical information would arrive too late to respond effectively in our rural context.

(Interview with Health Assistant, 2025)

This implies that in Lyantonde, staff over-rely on informal communication channels like WhatsApp due to weak formal systems posing risks of inconsistency, information gaps, and delayed

accountability, which ultimately affect the efficiency and reliability of sanitary service delivery.

It was also purported that;

As a resident of Kaliiro Parish, I can say we felt the urgency when the sanitation team arrived almost immediately after the outbreak alert. They told us they had been informed through their WhatsApp group. It gave us confidence knowing the leaders were working together and acting fast. Some of us even received messages from the VHTs the same day, advising on how to prevent the spread. I believe that if that kind of communication had been used earlier, maybe the cases wouldn't have spread so fast.

(Interview with Community Member, 2025).

This implies that while formal communication systems like email exist in Kariro Rural Subcounty, their limited effectiveness due to poor internet access and low usage has led staff to depend on informal channels like SMS and WhatsApp for timely coordination. This reliance, though efficient in emergencies, highlights structural gaps in digital infrastructure and routine communication practices, which may undermine consistency and institutional accountability in the long term.

According to the Health Inspector (2025)

In our Kariro Town Council office, we hold a formal sanitation coordination meeting every month, typically on the first Tuesday. However, attendance is consistently low; many field staff only hear about it days afterwards because notifications are often sent at the last minute. To try to close this gap, we set up a dedicated WhatsApp group for all sanitation personnel, where reminders and agendas are posted in advance. This has improved awareness for those with smartphones and data, but it still excludes several officers in outlying parishes

who either lack the devices or cannot afford mobile data. As a result, we continue to miss critical input from those frontline teams, and follow-up actions sometimes stall because key staff never received the initial notice.

This implies that delayed and uneven communication, especially last-minute notices and reliance on WhatsApp, limits participation in coordination meetings, excludes staff without digital access, and leads to missed input and stalled follow-up actions, ultimately weakening frontline sanitation response.

Village Health Team Member 2025 noted that;

We rarely receive formal written memos at the village level here in Kyakaburu village. Instead, most instructions come from the Lyantonde Health Centre via direct phone calls or WhatsApp voice notes. This informal channel works when the network is strong, but in areas like northern Kyewamura Parish, mobile reception is spotty. I have missed alerts about vaccination schedules and clean-up campaigns simply because the voice note couldn't download. Without reliable coverage, we're left out of critical planning, and community mobilisation suffers.

This implies that overdependence on informal, network-reliant communication like phone calls and WhatsApp voice notes without supporting formal systems leaves village-level staff vulnerable to missed information in poor reception areas, resulting in weak community mobilisation and gaps in service delivery.

At the Lyantonde District headquarters, the Chief Administrative Officer's office issues all major directives through formal letters and circulars, which are distributed to each department and sub-county. However, the effectiveness of these communications hinges

entirely on diligent follow-up without it, the instructions often remain unimplemented. To bolster compliance, we've started using WhatsApp more frequently: sub-county leaders receive quick reminders about deadlines, brief updates on emerging issues, and digital copies of the official documents. During last month's sanitation audit, for example, a midnight WhatsApp reminder prompted all sub-county chiefs to submit their reports by 8:00 AM, substantially improving our turnaround time compared to the previous quarterly deadline. (ADHO-Environmental health officer, 2025).

This implies that while formal directives are issued through official letters and circulars, their implementation in Lyantonde District heavily depends on active follow-up. The integration of WhatsApp reminders has proven effective in reinforcing compliance and improving responsiveness, highlighting the need to blend formal protocols with real-time digital communication for better accountability and timeliness.

Sub-theme 2: Frequency and Timeliness of Communication

The frequency and timeliness of communication are essential for keeping communities informed, engaged, and prepared. Frequent communication ensures that important messages are reinforced and that updates are shared regularly, especially when new programs, health threats, or behavioural changes are introduced. Timely communication ensures that information reaches communities when it is most needed, before challenges escalate or in response to emergencies. Infrequent or delayed communication, on the other hand, can lead to community apathy, slow response to health risks, or missed opportunities for intervention. In Lyantonde District, many community members and stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with how often and how quickly sanitation-related

information is communicated. The quotes below capture some of these sentiments:

There is no consistent schedule for communication from the district office to our sub-county team. It's unpredictable sometimes we can go for two or even three weeks without hearing anything, and then suddenly, late at night, we will receive a message instructing us to attend a meeting the very next morning. This kind of last-minute communication makes it extremely difficult to plan or prioritise field activities. For example, we might have already mobilised a community sanitation campaign or scheduled follow-ups with households, only to cancel or postpone everything at the last minute. It not only disrupts our workflow but also creates confusion among community members who rely on our presence (Sub-county Health Assistant, 2025).

This implies that inconsistent and last-minute communication from the district office disrupts sub-county planning, forces abrupt changes to field activities, and undermines community trust, ultimately weakening the effectiveness and reliability of sanitation service delivery.

Honestly, communication has become very irregular since the COVID-19 period ended. Back then, we used to receive daily updates and clear instructions through SMS and WhatsApp from the health centre and district office. But now, even for major public health campaigns like immunisations or sanitation drives, we often receive information at the very last minute. Sometimes we're instructed to mobilise entire villages with less than 24 hours' notice. This rushed approach doesn't give us enough time to prepare or engage the community properly. People complain that we inform them too late, and participation ends up being low, not because of unwillingness, but because the

planning is too abrupt (Village Health Team Member, 2025).

This implies that the post-COVID decline in regular communication has led to rushed, last-minute mobilisation for major health activities, undermining proper community engagement, reducing participation, and compromising the overall effectiveness of public health interventions.

In my office, internal communication is far from consistent. There are instances when I only find out about changes in sanitation schedules or field activities through casual conversations with colleagues, long after the decisions were made at the central office. Ideally, such updates should come through official channels, but in reality, they're often delayed or passed along informally. Timeliness is a major issue. There have been several occasions where key messages or directives arrived after the deadline had already passed or when it was no longer possible to act on them. This lack of prompt communication affects how effectively we deliver sanitation services and creates confusion within our teams (Environmental Health Officer, 2025).

This indicates that inconsistent and delayed internal communication leads to missed directives, confusion among staff, and reduced effectiveness in executing sanitation activities, highlighting the need for timely, structured, and reliable communication channels within the health system.

We are officially expected to hold coordination meetings monthly, particularly to align on sanitation and health activities, but in practice, these meetings rarely happen as scheduled. Sometimes we skip a month entirely without any explanation or rescheduling. Even more concerning is the delay in receiving updates from the district health department. Rather than being briefed ahead of time, we often find

ourselves learning about sanitation-related activities like pit latrine inspections or waste collection gaps through complaints raised by community members. This reactive approach undermines our ability to plan, respond, and provide adequate oversight. It creates the impression that we are disconnected from district-level operations, when in reality, we simply do not get timely communication (Town agent, 2025).

This shows that irregular coordination meetings and delayed updates from the district health department result in a reactive rather than proactive approach to sanitation management, limiting the sub-county's ability to plan effectively and weakening oversight and community trust.

Secretary for health and social services (2025)

While there have been commendable efforts to improve communication frequency—especially through platforms like WhatsApp, the consistency remains a major challenge. Urgent matters, such as disease outbreaks or emergency sanitation needs, are usually communicated promptly via WhatsApp or phone calls. However, routine updates like follow-up schedules, monthly reporting deadlines, or community outreach plans are often delayed or entirely forgotten. There's no structured communication calendar or clear timeline being followed, which makes it hard to plan or coordinate with field teams. The lack of regular, predictable communication creates unnecessary confusion and reduces the overall efficiency of service delivery.

This shows that despite improvements in urgent communication through WhatsApp, the lack of a structured and consistent communication schedule for routine updates hampers planning, coordination, and efficiency in service delivery within the health and sanitation sectors.

Sub-theme 3: Clarity and Consistency of Messages – Whether Information is Clearly Understood

The communication is effective, especially in public health and sanitation; it must not only be consistent across different sources but also clearly understood by the target audience. Clarity ensures how easily the message is interpreted and acted upon, while consistency ensures that all stakeholders receive the same guidance without contradictions. When messages are ambiguous, overly technical, or contradictory, community members may become confused or disengaged, which ultimately undermines the effectiveness of sanitation interventions. In Lyantonde District, several community members expressed concern that the information they receive about sanitary services is often unclear, conflicting, or difficult to interpret. As a result, there is uncertainty around what actions to take and who to trust. The quotes below illustrate this issue:

Health Inspector (2025)

At Lyantonde Hospital, we occasionally receive circulars from the district health office, but the instructions are often vague or incomplete. For example, a letter might announce that a sanitation inspection is scheduled but fail to include key details such as the specific date, time, or target location. In such cases, we spend a lot of time making follow-up calls to different offices just to get clarification. This back-and-forth not only causes delays in our response but also interrupts our workflow. Instead of preparing proactively, we end up reacting at the last minute due to unclear messaging. It would be much more efficient if the communications were precise and accompanied by follow-up guidance or checklists.

This implies that vague and incomplete official communications lead to confusion, repeated follow-ups, and reactive responses among hospital staff,

which delay sanitation inspections and reduce operational efficiency. Clearer, more detailed messaging with actionable guidance is necessary to improve workflow and service delivery.

Community Development Officer (2025)

One of the biggest challenges we face here in Mpumudde is the inconsistency in messaging from the district level. For instance, we might be told this week to focus all our efforts on handwashing campaigns, only to receive another directive the following week, shifting our priority entirely to waste management without any formal transition or proper handover. This sudden shift, without explanation or coordination, creates confusion among the field teams. They're left unsure of what activities to prioritise, and resources like flyers or community mobilisation tools are sometimes wasted. The lack of continuity undermines the momentum of ongoing initiatives and reduces the community's trust in our programs because they see us constantly changing direction.

This implies that inconsistent and frequently changing directives from district leadership disrupt the focus and continuity of field activities, causing confusion among teams, inefficient use of resources, and diminished community trust in sanitation and health programs.

Chairperson LCI (2025)

There was a recent case where we were instructed to prepare for a community cleaning exercise. Initially, we were told it would happen on a Monday, then we received another message saying it had been moved to Wednesday. We adjusted our mobilisation plans both times, but in the end, the activity didn't happen at all. By then, we had already informed and gathered the community twice. That kind of

inconsistency not only wastes our time and effort, but it also damages our credibility with the residents. People start to lose trust in our information because they think we're disorganised or unreliable, even though the confusion comes from higher up.

This indicates that inconsistent scheduling and last-minute changes to community activities cause wasted effort, frustrate both staff and residents, and erode community trust in sanitation initiatives, ultimately undermining program credibility and effectiveness.

Health Assistant (2025)

A common problem we face in Kasagama s/c is receiving incomplete or unclear messages. Often, we're told there will be a sanitation review meeting, but the communication doesn't specify key details like whether the meeting is in person or virtual, what time it starts, or even the venue. We usually have to call several different offices or individuals just to get the full picture. These back-and-forth delays our planning and waste valuable time that could be spent on fieldwork. In some cases, by the time we finally get the right information, we've already missed part of the meeting or had to cancel community activities we had scheduled for the same day. There needs to be a more structured and complete approach to how such messages are communicated.

This indicates that incomplete and unclear messaging about meetings causes confusion, multiple follow-ups, and delays in planning, which disrupts staff schedules and reduces time available for essential fieldwork, ultimately affecting the efficiency of sanitation service delivery.

Chairperson LC2 (2025)

One of the most serious gaps we face is the lack of clarity in communication from the district offices. Many of the messages we receive, especially written circulars or verbal directives during meetings, are filled with technical language that's difficult for local leaders or community-based volunteers to fully understand. For example, documents may include terms related to sanitation protocols or health indicators without any explanation or translation. As a result, instructions are sometimes misinterpreted or not followed at all because the intended meaning is unclear. There's an urgent need for simplification and standardisation in how communication is structured using plain language, bullet points, or even translated versions in the local dialect. That would ensure everyone from the sub-county level to grassroots workers can act accurately and efficiently.

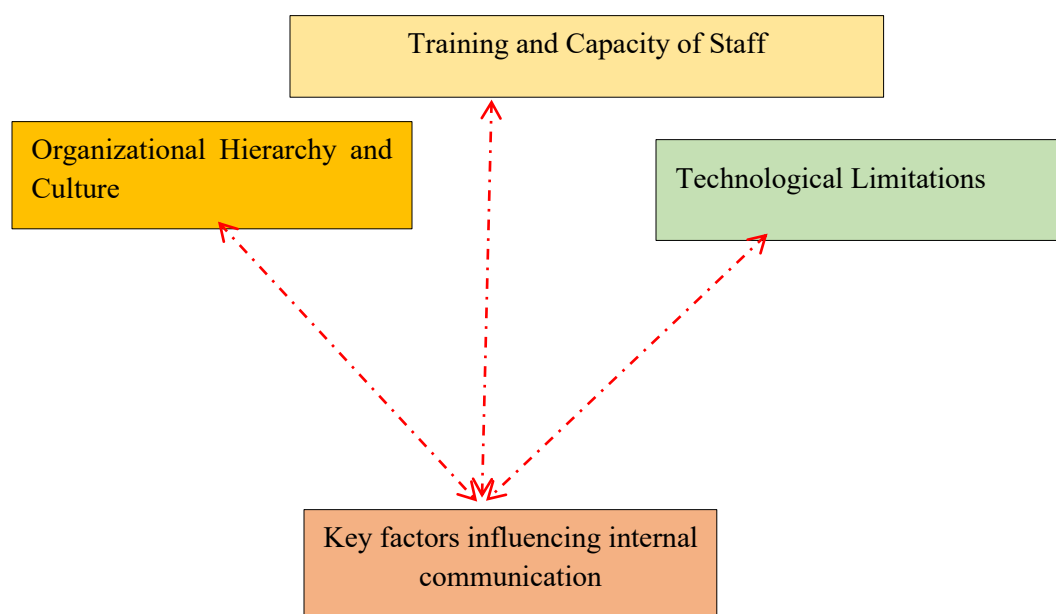
This indicates that the use of technical jargon and complex language in district communications leads

to misunderstandings and improper implementation of sanitation directives by local leaders and community volunteers, highlighting the urgent need for simplified, standardised, and locally translated messaging to enhance clarity and effectiveness.

Key Factors Influencing Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

This objective aims to uncover the major elements that affect the flow, clarity, and effectiveness of internal communication within Lyantonde District's administrative and health systems. These factors may include technological capacity (such as access to the internet or mobile devices), staff skills and digital literacy, organisational culture, leadership styles, reporting protocols, and resource availability. The study seeks to understand the barriers and enablers of effective communication, which is crucial for coordinating sanitation efforts and ensuring responsive service delivery across the district, as per the following quotations.

Figure 2: Key Factors Influencing Internal Communication



Sub-Theme 1: Technological Limitations – Poor ICT Infrastructure Affecting Communication.

Effective communication today relies heavily on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools such as mobile phones, internet connectivity, and digital platforms. In public service delivery, these technologies enable rapid sharing of information, timely coordination, and efficient feedback collection. However, in many rural or under-resourced areas, poor ICT infrastructure hinders these benefits, causing delays, miscommunication, and exclusion of some community members or staff from vital updates. In Lyantonde District, stakeholders reported significant challenges due to inadequate technological resources. Limited network coverage, lack of devices, and unreliable power supply often obstruct smooth communication among sanitary service providers and between officials and the community. The following verbatim responses illustrate these constraints:

Senior Environmental Health Officer (2025)

In reality, WhatsApp has become our go-to platform for sending out urgent health alerts and coordination notices. However, its effectiveness is frequently undermined by poor and unreliable network coverage, especially in the more remote sub-counties. For instance, during the cholera alert last month, we shared an official bulletin via WhatsApp to all sub-county health offices. Unfortunately, nearly half of them couldn't download or view the file because of network outages or slow internet speeds. As a result, we had to quickly turn to alternative means like using local radio announcements to make sure the message reached the frontline staff and communities in time. It was a stark reminder that while digital tools are useful, they cannot fully replace traditional channels in areas where infrastructure is still lacking. We need a more

integrated communication strategy that accounts for such limitations.

This implies that successful sanitation delivery in Lyantonde District depends on building a resilient communication system that blends both digital and traditional methods. Relying solely on platforms like WhatsApp can lead to delays and gaps in response due to inconsistent network access.

Sub-County Chief (2025).

The lack of reliable internet connectivity in most of our rural outposts is a major challenge. At my office, the signal is so poor that I often have to travel over 10 kilometres to the nearest trading centre just to access my email or download official documents. This is not just inconvenient, it directly affects the timeliness of our response. There have been several occasions where I missed key district directives or received them too late to coordinate the required action. This affects everything from sanitation campaigns to community mobilisation exercises. We're expected to implement decisions quickly, but the communication system does not support that urgency. Until we have consistent access to the internet and improved digital infrastructure at the sub-county level, we'll continue facing coordination delays and operational inefficiencies.

This implies that poor internet connectivity at the sub-county level severely undermines the effectiveness and timeliness of sanitation service delivery and public health coordination in Lyantonde District. Without investment in reliable digital infrastructure, the responsiveness of sanitation and health interventions will remain compromised, highlighting the urgent need for improved connectivity in rural health outposts.

Environmental Health Officer (2025)

At our health centre, we only have one desktop computer designated for reporting and correspondence. Unfortunately, it's offline more often than not because the internet service provider subscription is either unpaid or delayed due to budget constraints. This greatly affects our ability to update or submit sanitation data in real time. Instead of uploading reports digitally, we resort to compiling them manually, batching them, and then physically transporting them to the district office. This process is not only time-consuming but also prone to errors and delays. By the time the data reaches the decision-makers, it's already outdated, which limits the effectiveness of timely interventions. Without stable internet and better ICT infrastructure, we'll remain stuck in this inefficient reporting cycle.

This implies that inadequate ICT infrastructure and unreliable internet access at the health centre significantly hinder timely sanitation data reporting in Lyantonde District. The reliance on manual compilation and physical submission of reports leads to delays, errors, and outdated information reaching decision-makers, ultimately weakening the effectiveness of interventions. For a Senior Environmental Health Officer, addressing these gaps through stable internet connectivity and improved digital tools is critical to enhancing data accuracy, real-time reporting, and responsive sanitation service delivery.

Village Health Team Member (2025) noted that;

As a VHT member in a rural parish like Kaliiro, my ability to stay updated on sanitation activities and health alerts is very limited. I only have a basic feature phone—no access to WhatsApp, internet, or email. This makes it difficult to receive real-time updates from the sub-county or district health office, which increasingly relies on digital platforms like WhatsApp groups for coordination. I depend on

colleagues to forward important SMS messages, but these are often fragmented or delayed. In some cases, if the message contains too many characters or attachments, I don't receive anything at all because my phone cannot support it. This puts me at a disadvantage in terms of timely mobilisation and participation in sanitation campaigns. It also creates gaps in communication between us at the grassroots level and the health authorities. To work effectively, there needs to be consideration for staff who still rely on non-smartphone communication methods.

This implies that effective sanitation delivery in rural areas like Kaliiro Parish requires inclusive communication strategies that accommodate Village Health Team (VHT) members who lack smartphones or internet access. Relying solely on digital platforms such as WhatsApp excludes frontline workers from timely updates, undermines coordination, and delays community mobilisation efforts. For a Senior Environmental Health Officer, this highlights the need to integrate low-tech options such as structured SMS systems, radio announcements, and in-person briefings into sanitation communication plans to ensure no VHT member is left behind.

Community Development Officer (2025) had this to say;

Access to smartphones alone doesn't guarantee effective communication. Even among staff who own smartphones, the cost of buying data is a big barrier. Many of us are working on tight budgets, and internet bundles are not reimbursed by the district. As a result, people prioritise reading only the most urgent messages. Coordination reminders, planning updates, and routine communications often go unread or are postponed until the next physical meeting. This disrupts workflow and slows down response time, especially when decisions

need to be made quickly. It's common to find staff missing updates about sanitation drives or community outreach schedules simply because they couldn't afford to stay online. To improve internal communication, we need not just digital tools, but also affordable access and institutional support to sustain their use.

This implies that improving internal communication for effective sanitation delivery requires more than just providing digital tools, it demands addressing affordability and institutional support. Even with smartphone access, high data costs prevent timely engagement with important messages, leading to missed updates and delayed responses. This underscores the need for the district to allocate resources for internet access or data subsidies and to establish alternative communication mechanisms to ensure that all staff can consistently receive and act on critical sanitation-related information.

Sub-theme 2: Organisational Hierarchy and Culture – Bureaucratic Barriers or Openness.

The structure and culture of an organisation significantly influence how communication flows and how effectively services are delivered. In bureaucratic settings with rigid hierarchies, information often passes through many layers before reaching the intended recipients, leading to delays, distortion, or suppression of critical feedback. Conversely, an open organisational culture encourages transparent, direct communication, fosters collaboration, and empowers employees at all levels to contribute ideas and raise concerns. Within the sanitary services in Lyantonde District, staff and community members have reported challenges linked to bureaucratic barriers that limit effective communication and responsiveness. The following statements reflect perceptions of a hierarchical culture that sometimes stifles openness:

Senior Environmental Health Officer (2025) assert that;

Many decisions get stalled on my desk—not because we don't want to act, but because the approval process is cumbersome. A single requisition or operational directive has to pass through the finance office, the legal department, and then policy review before implementation. Each step requires physical signatures and separate consultations. By the time the process is completed, frontline teams have either lost momentum or moved on to other tasks. It's incredibly frustrating, especially when simple or time-sensitive requests are delayed due to bureaucratic red tape.

This implies that bureaucratic delays and rigid approval processes significantly hinder timely sanitation interventions at the district level. For a Senior Environmental Health Officer, the need to navigate multiple departments for physical approvals slows down decision-making, leading to stalled activities and reduced efficiency among frontline teams. To improve responsiveness and operational effectiveness, there is a critical need for streamlined workflows, digitised approval systems, and delegated authority for routine sanitation-related decisions.

Sub-county Chief (2025) propounded that;

In our administrative structure, there's an unspoken culture of deference that affects internal communication. Junior officers rarely speak up during meetings, even when they have valuable insights. Most are afraid that if they contradict or challenge the opinions of someone higher up, they might be labelled as insubordinate or risk being sidelined from key assignments. This kind of environment discourages honest feedback and innovation. What we really need are open communication forums, safe spaces where all voices are heard and respected regardless of rank. That way, even frontline staff who interact directly with communities can contribute meaningfully to

planning and service delivery. A more inclusive communication culture would improve both morale and effectiveness across departments.

This implies that the current hierarchical culture within the administrative structure undermines effective internal communication and limits the flow of valuable frontline insights. Fear of contradicting senior staff discourages open dialogue, stifles innovation, and prevents junior officers from contributing meaningfully to sanitation planning and service delivery. Thus, fostering a more inclusive and respectful communication environment through open forums and safe spaces would empower all staff to share ideas, enhance collaboration, and ultimately improve the quality and responsiveness of sanitation programs across departments.

Community Development Officer (2025) has this to say;

When we propose new ideas like rotating sanitation responsibilities among different villages to increase ownership, the procedure is very bureaucratic. We're expected to draft a formal proposal, submit it to the Sub-County Development Committee, then wait for it to go through the Technical Planning Committee and finally the District Executive. Each step takes weeks or even months. By the time feedback comes, the momentum on the ground is lost. This process stifles innovation and discourages frontline creativity. Field officers feel their initiatives are buried under layers of approvals rather than being supported for timely action.

This implies that the bureaucratic approval process for implementing new sanitation initiatives is a major barrier to innovation and timely community engagement. Frontline ideas like rotating sanitation responsibilities to boost local ownership are often delayed by prolonged committee reviews and administrative bottlenecks. This highlights the need

to streamline decision-making pathways and introduce flexible, field-level approval mechanisms that empower local teams to act swiftly. Supporting frontline creativity with timely institutional backing is essential for responsive and community-driven sanitation delivery.

Village Health Team Member (2025) noted that;

As someone who works directly with the community every day, I often have a clearer and more immediate understanding of what people need, whether it's sanitation supplies, awareness campaigns, or urgent health interventions. But I can't act on those needs directly. I'm required to route all requests through my supervisor, then it goes to the sub-county office, and only then to the district level. That communication chain is long and bureaucratic. By the time feedback or a response finally comes back down, the situation on the ground has often changed, or the urgency has passed. It's frustrating because we miss opportunities to intervene in real time. Streamlining this communication process could make a real difference in how quickly we respond to community issues.

This implies that the lengthy and bureaucratic communication chain hinders timely responses to urgent community sanitation needs. Frontline workers, despite their direct knowledge of immediate issues, lack the authority to act quickly, resulting in missed opportunities for real-time intervention.

ADHO Environmental Health (2025)

We are trying to flatten our structure by deliberately involving field officers in district-level planning workshops. It takes more effort to coordinate logistics and ensure everyone is informed, but the results have been worthwhile. This inclusive approach has improved buy-in,

reduced resistance, and minimised misunderstandings. People now feel that their insights matter, and that has made implementation smoother. When everyone feels part of the process, there is a shared sense of responsibility and purpose.

This shows that adopting a more inclusive and participatory approach by involving field officers in district-level planning enhances communication, collaboration, and ownership in sanitation programs. Although it requires extra coordination effort, this strategy reduces resistance and misunderstandings, leading to smoother implementation.

Sub-theme 3: Training and Capacity of Staff – Communication Skills and Knowledge Levels.

The effectiveness of communication within any service delivery system largely depends on the skills and knowledge of the staff involved. Proper training equips employees with the necessary communication techniques, cultural sensitivity, and technical understanding required to engage effectively with colleagues, stakeholders, and communities. When staff lack adequate communication training, messages can be poorly delivered, misunderstood, or ignored, ultimately impacting service quality and community trust. In Lyantonde District, sanitation workers and administrative staff have expressed challenges related to limited training in communication, which affects their ability to convey important information clearly and engage communities meaningfully. The following quotes illustrate these concerns:

Senior Environmental Health Officer (2025)

"We conducted a one-day workshop on report writing last year, but it was too general to make a real impact. Many staff still struggle with how to craft clear messages, summarise key points, and properly format their data. You can tell this when reviewing reports that are vague,

disorganised, or full of jargon. There's a real need for continuous, hands-on communication training, something practical that reflects our actual day-to-day work challenges, not just theory in a workshop setting.

This implies that current communication training for staff is insufficiently practical and does not address the real challenges faced in report writing and data presentation. There is a clear need to implement ongoing, hands-on communication capacity-building tailored to everyday tasks. Strengthening these skills will improve the clarity, accuracy, and usefulness of reports, enhancing decision-making and accountability in sanitation and health programs.

Sub-county Chief (2025)

One of the major challenges we face in internal communication is the digital skills gap among some of our officers. A number of them have never used basic tools like email, Word processing, or even smartphone apps effectively. During recent planning exercises, we had to pair such staff with more tech-savvy colleagues just to help them send out simple email briefs or access documents shared through WhatsApp. This not only creates dependency but also slows down the entire communication chain. Information that could be circulated instantly ends up taking hours—or even days—to be processed. To improve efficiency, we need targeted digital literacy training for all frontline and administrative staff.

This implies that the digital skills gap among staff significantly hampers efficient communication and timely information sharing within the sanitation and health teams. Reliance on tech-savvy colleagues slows down processes and creates bottlenecks. Therefore, investing in targeted digital literacy training for all frontline and administrative

personnel is essential to streamline communication, enhance independence, and improve overall operational efficiency.

Environmental Health Officer (2025)

I learned how to use WhatsApp effectively through peer mentoring, not through any formal training. There's no structured capacity-building for internal communication. As a result, everyone develops their ways of sharing updates, some skip important details or use abbreviations that others can't interpret. It causes a lot of misunderstandings. If there were a formal training program, especially one that emphasised clarity, etiquette, and standard formats, communication would improve across departments.

This implies that the lack of formal training in digital communication leads to inconsistent and sometimes unclear information sharing among staff. Without standardised guidelines on clarity, etiquette, and formatting, misunderstandings arise that hinder effective coordination.

Village Health Team Member (2025)

We were never formally trained on how to give feedback within the system. So, when I try to point out gaps or issues in how sanitation activities are being carried out, like when supplies arrive late or community mobilisation isn't effective, I am not always sure what the proper protocol is, or even the right language to use. I speak from experience on the ground, but sometimes my comments are taken as criticism or defiance, and that upsets my supervisors. This discourages people like me from sharing observations that could help improve services. If we had clearer channels and training on how to communicate constructively, I think both sides would benefit.

This implies that the absence of formal feedback training and clear communication protocols discourages frontline workers like Village Health Team members from sharing valuable observations. Misunderstandings and fears of being perceived as insubordinate limit constructive dialogue, reducing opportunities to improve sanitation services.

Community Development Officer (2025)

Communication training is almost non-existent in our setting. Most of us have learned by doing trial and error. There's no structured orientation or capacity-building plan when it comes to internal communication. Yet we're expected to draft reports, speak at community gatherings, and engage with district officials. We need structured training modules on things like public speaking, report writing, and using digital communication platforms like email and WhatsApp professionally. If we had regular refresher courses, it would boost both our confidence and the quality of our work.

This implies that the lack of structured communication training leaves staff underprepared for essential tasks like reporting, public speaking, and digital correspondence, affecting the overall quality and professionalism of sanitation and health programs.

ADHO Environmental Health (2025)

We recruited some new staff this year who are excellent at engaging with communities; they know how to mobilise, build trust, and encourage participation. However, they struggle when it comes to formal communication tasks like technical report writing, documentation, or responding to district-level circulars. Balancing field experience with administrative competence is a challenge. Ideally, we would roll out a tailored capacity-building plan to strengthen

communication and documentation skills, but we haven't had the resources or budget allocation to do that yet. Without this kind of support, gaps continue to show up in reporting and coordination.

This implies that while new staff bring valuable community engagement skills, their limited proficiency in formal communication and reporting hampers overall program coordination and documentation quality. However, resource constraints currently limit such efforts, leaving persistent gaps in effective communication and reporting.

CONCLUSION

Current State of Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

The study concluded that internal communication in Lyantonde District is characterised by a mix of informal digital channels, such as WhatsApp, SMS, and phone calls, and formal methods like memos and circulars, with the former increasingly relied upon due to accessibility and speed. However, serious challenges persist, including inconsistent communication frequency, unclear or contradictory messages, limited feedback mechanisms, and a strong top-down flow that marginalises frontline workers. While emergency response communication tends to be more active and coordinated, routine updates and planning processes suffer from unpredictability and exclusion, leading to inefficiencies, duplication, and reduced trust among both staff and communities. Despite some improvements through mobile-based platforms, the overall internal communication environment remains fragmented, hierarchical, and reactive.

Key Factors Influencing Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

The findings concluded that internal communication within Lyantonde District is

significantly influenced by a combination of technological, organisational, and human capacity factors. Technological limitations such as poor internet connectivity, lack of access to smartphones, high data costs, and unreliable ICT infrastructure continue to hinder timely information sharing, particularly in rural sub-counties and among frontline workers. Moreover, hierarchical organisational culture and bureaucratic procedures slow down decision-making and discourage open dialogue, especially among junior staff who fear repercussions for voicing dissenting views. While there are signs of progress toward more inclusive practices, such as involving field officers in district planning, these are not yet widespread. Compounding these structural challenges is a clear skills gap: many staff lack formal training in communication tools and practices, relying instead on peer mentoring or learning through trial and error. This results in inconsistent message formats, vague reporting, and misunderstandings that disrupt coordination. Despite a growing reliance on digital platforms like WhatsApp, the absence of structured capacity-building in both digital literacy and communication etiquette undermines their potential.

Recommendation

Current State of Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

To enhance internal communication in Lyantonde District, it is recommended that the district adopt a more integrated and inclusive communication strategy that balances the use of informal digital tools with strengthened formal channels. This should include establishing clear communication protocols to ensure consistency and clarity, promoting two-way feedback mechanisms to empower frontline workers and encourage timely information flow, and investing in training programs that build digital literacy and effective communication skills across all staff levels.

Additionally, improving ICT infrastructure and ensuring affordable access to mobile data will help bridge connectivity gaps, particularly in rural areas. Leadership should foster a culture of openness and collaboration to reduce hierarchical barriers, enabling more participatory decision-making and enhancing trust both within the administration and with the communities served. Implementing these measures will contribute to a more efficient, responsive, and trustworthy sanitation service delivery system.

Key Factors Influencing Internal Communication in Lyantonde District

To address the key factors influencing internal communication in Lyantonde District, the study recommends investing in improved ICT infrastructure to enhance internet connectivity and provide affordable access to digital devices, especially for frontline workers in rural areas. The district should implement structured communication training programs focused on digital literacy, effective messaging, and feedback protocols to standardise communication practices and reduce misunderstandings. Efforts to flatten organisational hierarchies and streamline bureaucratic processes are essential to foster a more open and inclusive communication culture where all staff feel empowered to contribute without fear of reprisal. Additionally, promoting regular use of multiple communication channels, including both digital platforms and traditional methods, will ensure wider reach and inclusivity. Lyantonde District can significantly enhance the clarity, efficiency, and responsiveness of its internal communication systems after simultaneously strengthening technological capacity, building staff skills, and nurturing a supportive organisational environment.

REFERENCES

- Ayee, J. (2021). *Public Administration in Africa: Main Issues and Selected Country Studies*. Springer.
- Bordens, K., & Abbott, B. B. (2014). *Ebook: Research Design and Methods: A Process Approach*. McGraw Hill.
- Houkpatin, H. O., Leydon, G. M., Veighey, K., Armstrong, K., Santer, M., Taal, M. W., ... & Fraser, S. D. (2020). Patients' and kidney care team's perspectives of treatment burden and capacity in older people with chronic kidney disease: a qualitative study. *BMJ open*, 10(12), e042548.
- Jones, K. S. (2007). Automatic summarising: The state of the art. *Information Processing & Management*, 43(6), 1449-1481.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. (2021). *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. Wiley.
- Kettunen, J., & Tynjälä, P. (2018). Applying phenomenography in guidance and counselling research. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46(1), 1-11.
- Kiggundu, M. N. (2016). Alternative service delivery in Africa: The case for international regional organisations. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 4(2), 283-311.
- Kothari, C. R. (2021). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (5th ed.). New Age International Publishers, pp. 87, 115.
- Rangel De Almeida, J. J. (2012). 1851 International Sanitary Conference and the construction of an international sphere of public health.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2022). *Research methods for business students* (9th Edition). Pearson Education, pp. 76, 92, 98, 111.

World Health Organization. (2020). *Laboratory testing for 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in suspected human cases: Interim guidance, 17 January 2020*. World Health Organization.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zina, O. (2021). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Sage.