

## Original Article

# Perception of internal communication and organizational culture among staff of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the National University of Asunción

Percepción de la comunicación interna y de la cultura organizacional en funcionarios de la Facultad de Ciencias Médicas de la Universidad Nacional de Asunción

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Internal communication is a process that transmits information, ideas, and values across different hierarchical levels and work teams, with direct impact on the work environment, sense of belonging, and organizational culture of institutions. **Objective:** To describe FCM.UNA staff perceptions of internal communication and organizational culture during 2024. **Materials and methods:** Observational, descriptive, cross-sectional study with non-probability convenience sampling. The study population consisted of teaching, administrative, and healthcare staff of FCM.UNA. Sociodemographic, occupational, internal communication, and organizational culture variables were measured using a digital questionnaire created in Google Forms and sent via WhatsApp® and email. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics. **Results:** 347 staff members participated; mean age  $43 \pm 5$  years, 68.2% female, mean seniority  $15.7 \pm 9$  years; 51% perform administrative functions and 89.6% are permanent employees. More than 80% agreed or strongly agreed with all internal communication items assessed. Regarding organizational culture, more than 75% recognized that internal communication promotes teamwork, collaboration, sense of belonging, and alignment with institutional values. **Conclusions:** FCM.UNA staff perceive internal communication as clear, accessible, and useful for the organizational culture of the institution, with recognized effects on cohesion, collaboration, and sense of belonging.

**Keywords:** organizational communication, organizational culture, faculty, administrative staff, healthcare staff.

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## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** la comunicación interna es un proceso que transmite información, ideas y valores entre los distintos niveles jerárquicos y equipos de trabajo, con impacto directo en el clima laboral, el sentido de pertenencia y la cultura organizacional de las instituciones. **Objetivo:** describir la percepción de los funcionarios de la FCM.UNA sobre la comunicación interna y la cultura organizacional durante el año 2024. **Material y métodos:** estudio observacional, descriptivo, transversal, con muestreo no probabilístico por conveniencia. La población estuvo constituida por funcionarios docentes, administrativos y asistenciales de la FCM.UNA. Se midieron variables sociodemográficas, laborales, características de la comunicación interna y de la cultura organizacional mediante un cuestionario digital creado en Google Forms, enviado por vía WhatsApp® y correo electrónico. El análisis se realizó con estadística descriptiva. **Resultados:** participaron 347 funcionarios; edad media  $43 \pm 5$  años, 68,2% de sexo femenino, antigüedad media  $15,7 \pm 9$  años; 51% cumple función administrativa y 89,6% son funcionarios permanentes. Más del 80% se mostró de acuerdo o totalmente de acuerdo con los ítems de comunicación interna evaluados. En cuanto a la cultura organizacional, más del 75% reconoció que la comunicación interna promueve el trabajo en equipo, la colaboración, el sentido de pertenencia y la alineación con los valores institucionales. **Conclusiones:** los funcionarios de la FCM.UNA perciben que la comunicación interna es clara, accesible y útil para la cultura organizacional de la institución, con efectos reconocidos sobre la cohesión, la colaboración y el sentido de pertenencia.

**Palabras claves:** comunicación organizacional, cultura organizacional, personal docente, personal administrativo, personal asistencial.

## Introduction

Adequate internal communication is a process through which information, ideas, and values are transmitted among different hierarchical levels and work teams. When it functions properly, it strengthens the work environment, promotes collaborative work, and contributes to a solid organizational culture. Conversely, poor internal communication can decrease morale, generate conflicts, and affect institutional productivity<sup>(1-4)</sup>.

Internal communication plays a strategic role in improving institutional processes and has a recognized impact on the construction and maintenance of organizational culture, promoting environments of collaboration and commitment among employees<sup>(5-8)</sup>.

In the case of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the National University of Asunción (FCM-UNA), continuous interaction among teaching staff (tenured and teaching assistants), administrative personnel, and healthcare staff is essential to fulfill institutional purposes,

both in academic and healthcare settings. This interaction, aligned with the mission of FCM-UNA to train professionals in Health Sciences, fosters commitment, a sense of belonging, respect among members, and trust and transparency in management—elements that together shape the organizational culture of the institution<sup>(9)</sup>.

Understanding how staff perceive internal communication and its contribution to organizational culture constitutes a valuable tool for identifying strengths and guiding institutional improvements. Within this framework, this study aims to describe the perception of FCM-UNA staff regarding internal communication and organizational culture during the year 2024.

## Materials and Methods

Observational, descriptive, cross-sectional study with non-probabilistic convenience sampling.

The study population consisted of teaching, administrative, and healthcare staff of FCM-UNA during 2024.

The inclusion criteria comprised: tenured faculty and teaching assistants; healthcare staff (nursing and obstetrics personnel, health technicians, ward assistants, healthcare administrative staff, maintenance and general services personnel); and administrative staff involved in administrative, financial, human resources, and operational and logistical support, with at least one year of affiliation with the institution. Staff who did not wish to participate or did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded.

The variables measured included: (a) sociodemographic: age, sex, and length of service; (b) occupational: category (teaching, healthcare, or administrative), department, employment status (contracted or permanent), and for teaching staff, level of instruction (undergraduate, postgraduate, or both); (c) internal communication: clarity of information, frequency of communications, effectiveness of the channels used, and overall satisfaction; and (d) organizational culture: cohesion and teamwork, sense of belonging, collaboration, recognition of good performance, and alignment with institutional values.

For data collection, authorization was requested from institutional authorities, and an invitation was extended to all staff across the different categories. Data were collected using a digital questionnaire created in Google Forms, distributed via WhatsApp® and email. The instrument was designed by the researchers and included 8 items on internal communication and 5 items on organizational culture, with responses on a four-point Likert scale (disagree, neither agree nor disagree,

agree, and strongly agree).

The collected data were exported to an Excel® spreadsheet. Qualitative variables were expressed as absolute and relative frequencies (percentages), and quantitative variables as means and standard deviation. The statistical program Epi Info version 7.2.6.0 was used. Results were presented in tables.

## Ethical considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous; completion of the questionnaire constituted implicit consent from the participants. The confidentiality of personal data was guaranteed, and the study did not cause any harm or cost to the participants.

## Results

A total of 347 staff members from FCM-UNA participated. The mean age was  $43 \pm 5$  years (range: 20–73 years); 236 (68.2%) were female, and the mean length of service was  $15.7 \pm 9$  years (minimum: 1 year; maximum: 43 years). **Table 1** presents the occupational characteristics. The administrative category was the most frequent (177; 51%); by department, most corresponded to administrative departments and directorates (196; 56%); and 311 (89.6%) were permanent staff.

Regarding the perception of internal communication (**Table 2**), more than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all evaluated items: 90% considered that the information received is clear and understandable; the same proportion positively evaluated the effectiveness of the channels used; 83% reported having easy access to the information necessary for their work; 87% indicated that messages facilitate the understanding of institutional policies and procedures; 83% stated that important messages are communicated in a timely manner; 88% considered the frequency

of communications to be adequate; 81% recognized that internal communication provides sufficient information for decision-making; and 85% reported being satisfied with internal communication overall.

Table 1. Occupational characteristics of FCM-UNA staff (n=347).

| Variable                                   | n   | %     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| <b>Main work role</b>                      |     |       |
| Administrative                             | 177 | 51,0  |
| Healthcare                                 | 99  | 28,5  |
| Teaching                                   | 18  | 5,2   |
| Teaching and healthcare                    | 53  | 15,3  |
| Total                                      | 347 | 100,0 |
| <b>Department where they work</b>          |     |       |
| Chair                                      | 11  | 3,2   |
| Chair and service                          | 89  | 25,6  |
| Administrative department and directorates | 196 | 56,5  |
| Directorate                                | 51  | 14,7  |
| Total                                      | 347 | 100,0 |
| <b>Employment status</b>                   |     |       |
| Permanent                                  | 311 | 89,6  |
| Contracted                                 | 36  | 10,4  |
| Total                                      | 347 | 100,0 |

Table 2. Perception of internal communication among FCM-UNA staff (n=347).

| Item                                                                                                                 | Disagree n (%) | Neither agree nor disagree n (%) | Agree n (%) | Strongly agree n (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| The information you receive within FCM.UNA is clear and understandable.                                              | 5 (1%)         | 22 (6%)                          | 182 (53%)   | 128 (37%)            |
| Internal communication channels (email, instant messaging, internal meetings) are effective in keeping you informed. | 9 (3%)         | 15 (4%)                          | 177 (51%)   | 137 (39%)            |
| You have easy access to the information you need for your work.                                                      | 15 (4%)        | 33 (10%)                         | 188 (54%)   | 99 (29%)             |
| Internal communication messages facilitate the understanding of FCM-UNA policies and procedures.                     | 10 (3%)        | 24 (7%)                          | 183 (53%)   | 119 (34%)            |
| Important messages are communicated in a timely manner through internal communication channels.                      | 15 (5%)        | 32 (9%)                          | 184 (53%)   | 105 (30%)            |
| The frequency of internal communications is adequate to keep me updated.                                             | 8 (2%)         | 28 (8%)                          | 132 (38%)   | 173 (50%)            |
| Internal communication provides sufficient information to make informed decisions in my work.                        | 7 (2%)         | 50 (15%)                         | 198 (57%)   | 84 (24%)             |
| You are satisfied with internal communication within FCM-UNA.                                                        | 13 (4%)        | 30 (9%)                          | 191 (55%)   | 106 (30%)            |

Regarding organizational culture (**Table 3**), more than 75% of the staff agreed or strongly agreed with all the evaluated items.

Seventy-nine percent acknowledged that strategic internal communication messages contribute to cohesion and teamwork; 80% indicated that FCM-UNA values are reflected

in internal communications; 84% reported that internal communication influences their sense of belonging to the institution; 86% considered that it fosters active participation and collaboration among staff; and 84% recognized that it promotes the recognition of well-performed work.

**Table 3.** Perception of organizational culture among FCM-UNA staff (n=347).

| Item                                                                                        | Disagree n (%) | Neither agree nor disagree n (%) | Agree n (%) | Strongly agree n (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Strategic internal communication messages contribute to cohesion and teamwork in your area. | 11 (3%)        | 51 (15%)                         | 199 (57%)   | 76 (22%)             |
| FCM-UNA values are reflected in internal communications.                                    | 11 (3%)        | 49 (14%)                         | 187 (54%)   | 90 (26%)             |
| Internal communication influences your sense of belonging to FCM-UNA.                       | 9 (3%)         | 39 (11%)                         | 195 (56%)   | 97 (28%)             |
| Internal communication fosters active participation and collaboration among staff.          | 8 (2%)         | 34 (10%)                         | 199 (57%)   | 99 (29%)             |
| Internal communication promotes recognition of well-performed work at FCM-UNA.              | 10 (3%)        | 39 (11%)                         | 184 (53%)   | 107 (31%)            |

## Discussion

This study shows that most staff at FCM-UNA have a positive perception of institutional internal communication and recognize its usefulness for organizational culture. This favorable perception encompasses both operational aspects—such as clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of information—and relational aspects, particularly team cohesion, sense of belonging, and alignment with institutional values.

Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, most participants were female, with a mean age of 43 years and an average tenure of nearly 16 years. These findings are similar to those reported in other academic and healthcare institutions, where female staff predominate in administrative, support, and care roles<sup>(10,11)</sup>. The relatively long tenure suggests a consolidated institution, which favors familiarity with communication processes and a stronger attachment to institutional culture<sup>(12)</sup>.

In terms of occupational characteristics, administrative staff constituted the largest group, followed by healthcare personnel and, to a lesser extent, teaching staff. This distribution is consistent with reports from other higher education institutions with hospital functions<sup>(13)</sup>. Most participants were permanent employees, which contributes to a more stable organizational culture and facilitates the internalization of institutional values<sup>(14–16)</sup>.

The broadly favorable perception of internal communication—across dimensions such as clarity, channel effectiveness, access to information, and overall satisfaction—is consistent with studies indicating that effective institutional communication strengthens the sense of belonging, improves the work environment, and fosters active participation<sup>(17–20)</sup>. The use of digital channels was highly valued, aligning with research highlighting digitalization as a key tool for effective and wide-reaching institutional communication<sup>(21)</sup>.

The findings related to organizational culture are similarly positive: most staff perceived that internal communication contributes to cohesion, recognition of well-performed work, and alignment with institutional values. This is consistent with the literature emphasizing the strategic role of communication in disseminating organizational goals, strengthening collective commitment, and facilitating adaptation to change <sup>(22–25)</sup>. The smaller proportion of staff expressing disagreement or neutrality in some items suggests areas for improvement, possibly related to differences in access to information depending on role or hierarchical level <sup>(26)</sup>.

The limitations of this study include: greater participation from administrative staff compared to healthcare and teaching staff; a cross-sectional design; non-probabilistic convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings; a questionnaire developed by the researchers without prior psychometric validation; and the potential for social desirability bias in the context of an institutional survey.

Future studies could explore differences in perception across staff groups, levels of seniority, and employment conditions (contracted vs. permanent), as well as evaluate the impact of specific communication improvement initiatives using longitudinal designs.

## Conclusions

Staff at FCM-UNA perceive institutional internal communication as clear, timely, accessible, and useful for strengthening organizational culture. The vast majority recognize its contribution to team cohesion, collaboration among staff, sense of belonging, and alignment with institutional values.

These findings provide a relevant starting point for designing internal communication strategies aimed at the continuous

strengthening of FCM-UNA's organizational culture.

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