



**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

**DOCTOR OF COMMUNICATION**

**AGUILAR, MONALICE G.**

**AGILE COMMUNICATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL  
ORGANIZATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

Dissertation Adviser:

**Dr. MELINDA dP. BANDALARIA**  
**Faculty of Information and Communication Studies**

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**DR. MELINDA dP. BANDALARIA**

Chair, Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR**

Member, Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. ANTONIO G. MORAN**

Member, Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. DIEGO S. MARANAN**

**Dean**

Faculty of Information and Communication Studies

(Date)

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Monalice Gutierrez–Aguilar, MDC, LPT, was born in Morong Rizal, Philippines. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication in 2005 from New Era University. She completed her Master’s in Development Communication at the University of the Philippines Open University in 2011.

She has been in the walls of the academe for more than a decade now, teaching as a college professor. She is known for her passion in the field of education and communication, particularly in the areas of Broadcasting, Journalism, Organizational Development, Corporate Communication, and Development Communication. Her interdisciplinary expertise ranges from Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and Strategic Management to Competency and Performance Management and Development.

Monalice also had a career in Broadcasting. She became a mainstay TV host at Eagle Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) Net 25’s Taumbahay from 2015 to 2019. Taumbahay is a women’s magazine show aiming to give advice and help women of all ages.

Various career paths have led her to be a project coordinator for learning development and management at an international educational organization and, later, a human resource officer. Her tasks involve developing and carrying out performance and competency management, policy formulation, and talent and organizational development.

Her education has been as diverse as her career, for she also completed the Data Wise Improvement Process certificate course at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, and Constructive Classroom Conversations under the Stanford Center for Professional Development, Stanford University.

Her research interests revolve around the fields of education, organization, and communication. She is an advocate of education and communication for development.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.”*

*- Isaiah 26:3-4*

**To the LORD Almighty**, when I thought I cannot continue anymore, and in the verge of giving up, You, Oh Lord, sustained me. *Alinman sa mga ito ay hindi magkakatotoo kung hindi po dahil sa awa at tulong Mo.*

**To Dr. MdPB**, my dissertation adviser, you guided me with elegance. Thank you for believing and putting your trust in me.

**To Dr. BPGP and Dr. AGM**, my dissertation panelists, for allowing me to explore and pulling me back to the right path whenever I go astray.

**To all my DComm** classmates turned friends, to **YOM** and **WDB**, and to my **ACSM Group**, true enough, we are all in this together. Maraming Salamat. Padayon!

**To the staff and leaders of my organization**, thank you for being my enabler.

**To LTBC**, you never let me down. Words are not enough to express my appreciation.

**To one and all**, you know who you are - my never-ending thanks and gratitude.

## DEDICATION

**For my parents, RGG and ADG**, who never once doubted my abilities. Dad would have been the proudest if he were still here.

**For my siblings, AaDG, JMDG, and AIDG**, for your unending support and for always including me and my family in your prayers.

**For my aunt, JDG, and uncle, MTD**, who stood as my second parents, adviser, and confidant throughout my dissertation journey and life, in general.

**For AmGA and AeGA**, you both are my pillars of strength and inspiration.

**For MANA**, I hope I made you proud.

...and for the **LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**, *sa Iyo po Ama ang lahat ng kapurihan!*

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## ABSTRACT

**AGUILAR, MONALICE G.**, University of the Philippines Open University, December 2023, Agile Communication in An International Educational Organization: A Phenomenological Study

Using phenomenology, the researcher explored staff members' experiences in an international educational organization and made sense of the dynamic nature of their communicative practices in an ever-changing work environment. Based on the Husserl and Habermas frameworks, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of communication practices and organizational dynamics in the context of agile communication and the staff's lifeworld. Through in-depth interviews and employing the Discourse of Understanding grounded on the Phenomenological Tradition of Communication, the researcher made sense of the experiences of selected staff members, resulting in an emergent communication-centric concept of Agile Communication. The inquiry revealed that Agile Communication is flexible, adaptive, and stakeholder-centered, enabling quick response to changing circumstances and delivering value to stakeholders. It is a collaborative, innovative, and iterative process that promotes efficient work environments by working hand-in-hand with the iteration process. Agile communication is direct and transparent, promoting simple, face-to-face interaction that leads to consistent feedback loops. It is embedded in organizational culture and process, allowing for pivot strategies, structures, and processes. Finally, it maintains the quality of work outputs, enabling stakeholders to respond to changes without compromising quality and ensuring the timely delivery of projects. Hence, Agile Communication is a flexible, user-centric, collaborative, and transparent approach that prioritizes organizational quality. It lies in the social interaction and communicative activities of people within the organization, which allow the utilization of appropriate strategies, processes, and tools in managing and responding to change. More importantly, the study revealed that agile communication had become a concept that limits the systems to colonize the staff members' lifeworld.

**Keywords:** Agile Communication, Systems and Lifeworld, Organizational Communication, Project Management, Virtual Communication, Hybrid Work, Flexible and Adaptive Communication

## **Chapter I**

### **RATIONALE**

#### **Background of the Study**

Agile Communication is a concept that plays a crucial role in adaptation strategies within organizations. However, the current definitions of agile in organizations tend to focus more on specific organizational aspects rather than the communication context of the concept (Ruler, 2019). Most agile practices in organizations tend to focus more on the effective implementation of business strategies, facilitating strategic adaptation towards the achievement of strategic goals (ibid). This limited perspective poses a challenge as it fails to provide an understanding of agile communication as a communication phenomenon.

This study focuses on an international educational organization dedicated to providing innovative and technology-oriented learning services and research-based solutions to support the changing educational landscape in Southeast Asia and beyond. The main focus of this development organization is to capture and share knowledge products and solutions. They are keen on how they package and share their products in order to make generated knowledge accessible, available, relevant, readable, and usable for the stakeholders.

Given this, it is essential for the members of their staff to work consistently and collaboratively. This underscores the role of effective communication despite the changes in the environment and paradigm shifts. As a provider of educational and knowledge solutions for more than 50 years, this organization for educational research,

innovation, and technology employs advanced strategies and technologies even before the pandemic. They deliver teacher education focusing on the advancements prompted by the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution (IR 4) by adapting the concept of agility in project management and other operational processes.

The onset of the pandemic created a shift in the operations of many organizations. It revealed that conditions can change overnight in an unexpected way. Companies pivoted remote operations in response to the stringent quarantine orders during the height of the pandemic (Marr, 2021). In response to the emerging needs brought about by the unprecedented times, there has been a growing recognition of the role of digital technologies in transforming how organizations operate, which mainly rely on connectivity, information, usage, and collaboration (D'Souza and Williams, 2017) more than ever. The need to revisit the existing staff competencies and adopt a more inclusive and holistic approach within organizations (Pérez-Sanagustín et al., 2022) also became more imperative. Satya Nadella, Chief Operating Officer of Microsoft, in an article published in 2020, shared that they have seen two years' worth of digital transformation happen in just two months. She added that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of IR 4 technologies as people relied on digital technologies to survive and innovate by trying new ways of doing and working.

Within the organization, the shift in educational paradigms and the impact of the pandemic necessitate adjustments in the way they do things. As they aim to make their knowledge products accessible, available, relevant, readable, and usable for their stakeholders, the need to understand the changes in how they do things has become

imperative in order to deliver performance while maintaining the balance between the organizational objectives and the staff's personal/social lives.

Given the limitations in traditional workspaces brought about by the pandemic, the organization resorted to hybrid and work-from-home (WFH) arrangements utilizing virtual communication to survive and continue its operations. However, some hurdles in the Philippines have been identified, such as slow internet connectivity (Ochave, 2020), which hampers virtual communication. WFH also blurred the lines that separate work and home (Rioveros et al., 2021).

Aside from virtual communication, the staff recognizes the challenges of remote work arrangements and the factors contributing to them. The concept of agile communication took place during one of the brainstorming sessions among the staff of this international educational organization. As virtual communication is defined as any communication that is delivered via computer, smartphone, or other automated device (Khan, 2021), staff believe that their adaptive communicative practices are more than that. Lucid Chart (2023) defines Agile Communication as streamlining the process of conveying messages through face-to-face interactions or digital communication technologies. It adopts a minimalist approach to communication. Given this and the limited communication concept definition of agile communication, it is interesting to discover the contextualization and utilization of agile communication within an international educational organization. Exploring the lived experiences of staff members would provide valuable insights into their evolving communicative practices, as employees are the essence of agility. Their perception and experiences of the central phenomena can shed light on their innovative approaches and uncover how

agile communication has attributed meaning within their organizational context, including the staff's lived world.

Phenomenology serves as an important lens in understanding the experiences in an organization, especially when capturing and providing rich and nuanced insights from the staff's interactions within the confines of the organization. It allows exploration of the meanings and essences of individuals' subjective experiences. Beyond surface-level observations, phenomenological research dives deeper into the personal and situational contexts of people's experiences. (Fisher & Robbins, 2015).

The strength of phenomenology lies in the description and interpretation of people's experiences (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Isnawan & Sudirman, 2022). With a qualitative approach, phenomenology can dive deep into the actions, perceptions, and emotions of individuals in their subjective world. The experiences of staff members shape their performance, engagement, and motivation, making it an important aspect of an organization.

According to Fisher & Robbins (2015), under epistemology, Husserl's phenomenology focuses on the lifeworld and conscious experiences in the construction of subjectivity and consciousness. They also added how Merleau-Ponty introduced the idea of "embodied consciousness," zooming in on the connections between the body, the consciousness, and the lifeworld. Supporting that, Moran (2000) pointed out how the exploration of the lifeworld helps with the understanding of meanings and structures behind one's experiences.

Picking up from Moran's (2000) insights, it was also stated how the concept of intentionality in Husserl's phenomenology enables researchers to explore and understand the reality of conscious experiences. This makes it an important lens for understanding organizational behavior.

According to Husserl, the concept of the lifeworld encompasses the everyday experiences that individuals passively live through (Moran, 2000). In his Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas (1981) presented two theses: system and lifeworld. He associates the lifeworld with specific domains of social life, such as family life, everyday life, and civil society, where communicative actions promoting common understanding and shared meaning exist; this is the day-to-day world people share with others. While system, with his engagement with the works of Luhman, are macro-level processes aimed to stabilize complexes of actions through steering mechanisms such as power and money. For him, systems are anchored in the lifeworld, where systems in the form of strategic actions are driven by economy (money) and bureaucracy (power). According to him, its primary function is to harmonize and stabilize the differing individual actions, which in turn results in social integration and reproduction **only if the system bears the right kind of relation to the lifeworld (ibid).**

By examining the staff's lifeworld, the researcher can uncover the structures and meanings they attach to agile communication based on their experiences and see how the system (organizational life) interacts with their lifeworld (personal/social life). This understanding of the lifeworld enables the researcher to explore the professional and personal experiences of the staff members in terms of agile communication.

Through this paper, the researcher will involve extensive consultations, including one-on-one interviews with staff members from various positions and ranks. Through these discussions, the researcher aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of the staff's account and explore how their communicative practices have evolved within the physical and virtual space, thereby fostering the principles of "agile communication."

Overall, this Center for Educational Innovations recognizes the importance of competent staff members in delivering innovative and technology-oriented learning services. The data gathered in this study will pave the way for how communication has changed and evolved among the staff, not only in terms of their virtual communication but also, more importantly, in terms of their agile communication. The results of this study may contribute to the academic literature on agile communication in an organizational context and in local settings, the impact of crises on personal/social life and professional development, and the application of phenomenological research in organizational studies can benefit future research in these areas. Other researchers can build upon the insights and findings of this study to deepen our understanding of agile communication and the effects of crises on organizations and their workforce.

One of the foci of this study is *SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities*, which also looks at how staff members of an international education organization used communication adaption tactics during the pandemic and how they affected closing the digital gap and lowering inequality. It has been acknowledged that the pandemic has contributed to the growing digital divide, especially with regard to access to digital resources and skills (Ibrahim, 2022). The study intends to provide insights into bridging the gaps and

making sure that disadvantaged groups are not left behind in the digital transformation by examining how the staff used agile communication tactics.

Another focus of the study beyond SDG 10 is *SDG 4: Quality Education*. It is possible to build policies and procedures that support inclusive and high-quality education for everyone by having a thorough understanding of the communication tactics and obstacles that an educational institution faces throughout the epidemic.

Finally, the study also relates to *SDG 9: Infrastructure, Industry, and Innovation*. Agile communication solutions depend on infrastructure improvements and technology developments to support communication and teamwork. This study offers insights into the role of industry and innovation in enabling resilient and effective communication amid crises by looking at how the staff modified their communication habits.

## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter, we will discuss the different concepts surrounding the areas of organization and communication, their importance, understanding the systems and the lifeworld, concepts about language pragmatics, and how these are related to the idea of a communication-producing organization. We will also dive into the phenomenology and its application in this study. Lastly, we will put it in the context of the pandemic to help understand staff members' experiences.

#### **Understanding the Systems and the Lifeworld**

Guided by Habermas' framework and influenced by the philosophies of Piaget and Kohlberg, the concepts of systems and lifeworld are also defined. These definitions steered the inquiry into communicative actions within the organization. Building on the insights of Alvesson and Willmott (1997) and Finlayson (2005), Habermas viewed the "Lifeworld" as encompassing the everyday world, including interactions with family and society. It comprises informal social interactions, family life, and cultural activities—essentially, aspects of life not driven by organizations. Actions in the lifeworld are primarily communicative, guided by a tacit understanding of shared meanings and interpretations.

Additionally, according to Habermas, "Systems" refer to common patterns of strategic action driven by money and power. These patterns serve the interests of institutions and organizations. Actions within systems are instrumental, using money and power to manipulate individuals to achieve the system's aims, which may not necessarily align

with individual aims. These actions are strategic, aimed at specific ends, often without a common understanding underlying the objectives (ibid).

Regarding the link between the system and the lifeworld, historically speaking, the system was rooted in the lifeworld out of the socioeconomic conditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But as the system expands and essentially colonizes the lifeworld, an issue occurs. Colonization of the lifeworld suggests that social and personal lives are invaded and taken over by the system, making it difficult to strike a balance between the two. Important roles for money and power are played in this colonization process, which encourages a self-serving "rational" approach to value and leaves people vulnerable to manipulation. Colonization reduces the lifeworld's worth and significance in people's day-to-day existence (ibid).

Fairtlough (1991), delving deeper into the idea of lifeworld colonization, examined the communicative basis of Habermas' work and emphasized the value of discourse in comprehending the natural world, human society, and oneself. Fairtlough offered useful applications for Habermas' lifeworld notion by tying it to communicative action and societal steering media.

On the contrary, Brand (1986) examined the similarities between Arendt's and Habermas' theories of action, emphasizing how their views about the evolution of contemporary society aligned. Arendt's talk proposed agreement based on the events themselves, but Habermas grounded his arguments in a social framework.

The evolution of Habermas' two-level theory, which combined systems-theoretic and action-theoretic perspectives, was described by Baxter (1987). The model examines social pathologies in developed capitalist cultures, highlighting the dangers that monetarization and bureaucratization pose to the social infrastructure that facilitates communication. In his reformulation, Baxter dropped the phrase "life-world" and emphasized the interconnectedness of these processes while concentrating on material and symbolic reproduction.

In the process of adding important concepts from Habermas to the discussion of transformational learning theory, Fleming (2000) discusses civil society, the public sphere, the lifeworld, and the system. As a countermeasure to lifeworld colonization, Fleming suggested discursive democracy, which aims to restructure the lifeworld and bring about institutional and systemic change through discourse.

To summarize, Fairtlough offered a strategy for decolonizing the lifeworld via sincere and candid discussion, and Brand linked Habermas' idea to Arendt's examination of the social domain. The foundation of lifeworld colonization, Habermas' two-level theory, was subjected to a critical evaluation by Baxter. Fleming expanded on the conversation by putting up the idea of discursive democracy as a countermeasure to the system's disruptive influence on people's behavior. This integrated investigation offers a thorough grasp of Habermas' lifeworld notion and its ramifications from a variety of angles in contemporary discourse.

## **Pragmatics In Language: Habermas' Four Truth Claims and Searle's Speech Acts**

The concept of pragmatics in language is another important concept that has to be examined, particularly when discussing phenomenology in relation to systems and lifeworld. The rationalization of the discourse surrounding the inquiry is quite related to the Habermasian communicative action, specifically his Four Truth Claims. The *Four Truth Claims of Habermas* are explained as follows by Finlayson (2005):

1. Truth, also known as a cognitive claim, pertains to the veracity of the assertion made by participants on the objective reality.
2. Truthfulness (Normative Claim): Refers to the speaker's genuineness and sincerity, and it includes an ethical component to guarantee that opinions are expressed honestly.
3. Concerned with the moral or ethical ramifications of a statement or action with respect to accepted norms and values, appropriateness (Ethical Claim) refers to conformity with accepted ethical standards.
4. Aesthetic Claim: Comprehensibility pertains to the degree of clarity and understandability of communication; it guarantees that the message is communicated in a manner that is easily understood by others and fosters mutual understanding.

Examining distortions in conjunction with these truth claims is essential because they affect the logic of the experiences in the investigation. According to Finlayson (2005), who cited Habermas, distortions are departures from the ideal circumstances of communicative engagement, which call for candid and open discussion. Habermas distinguishes between many kinds of distortions.

1. Deceit is the purposeful falsification of facts in order to mislead or fool people.
2. Deception is the act of giving someone a false impression or presenting data in a way that causes them to draw the wrong conclusions.
3. Manipulation: The use of cunning or deceit to exert influence or control over others, frequently for one's own benefit.
4. Self-deception is the deliberate or unintentional deception of oneself, which can affect how authentically and sincerely one communicates.

These distortions introduce elements of deceit, manipulation, and misunderstanding, which impede the development of authentic communicative action. To promote a more genuine and transparent exchange of ideas, participants in an ideal communication scenario work to eliminate distortions and preserve the four truth claims (ibid).

Another important lens that will support the inquiry undertaken is the Speech Acts theory by John Searle. Citing Searle's works, Hidayat (2016) succinctly explained how speech acts are actions performed through words. When someone speaks, they can convey not just information but also intentions or commitments. In learning a foreign language like English, understanding the intended meaning becomes easier if it's your native language. Speech acts are categorized into five types: **representatives** (expressing facts or opinions), **directives** (making requests or commands), **commissives** (committing to future actions), **expressives** (conveying psychological states), and **declarations** (immediately changing a situation). Each type serves different purposes in communication. For instance, saying, "Could you lend me a pencil, please?" is a directive, requesting someone to do something– the key is to

recognize the underlying action in the spoken words, bridging the gap between speech and action (ibid).

### **A Short Note on Ethics and Morality**

Taking the idea one step further, Habermas' works delve into the ethical and moral implications of communication. Finlayson (2005) explored the ethical aspects of Habermas' theory of speech and communication. Since speaking involves considering the motivations of others, mutual acknowledgment of validity claims forms the basis of communication action that occurs in the real world. Discourse follows the guidelines, ensuring respect and unity for all individuals. By following these guidelines, lifeworld communication integrates the values of inclusion and equality and promotes morality. Conversely, systems promote instrumental conduct and a disdain for other people's objectives. Finlayson draws a connection between Adorno's research on middle-class apathy and Habermas's theory that morally flawed people are the result of societal malfunctions brought on by the system's colonization of the lifeworld. The medical metaphor– "social pathologies" denotes a moral component to Habermas's theory.

In relation to that, Kelly (2020) noted how Communicative action structures exchanges between individuals based on rationality. When individuals hold different positions on social issues and problems, they engage in a dialogue and commit to a freely achieved agreement. This means that the outcome with the best argument is accepted. Rationality does not imply that all beliefs are equally valid, as a position cannot be justified simply because it belongs to someone. Individuals should be willing to revise their positions when presented with sound arguments. Personal truths and beliefs do not exist.

To put that into perspective, Finlayson talked about Habermas's perspective on communication and discourse, emphasizing the ethical aspect. It highlights communicative action based on mutual recognition, the role of speech in considering others, and the moralization process in the lifeworld. It contrasts this with the instrumental habits fostered by systems. On the other hand, Kelly emphasized communicative action as the rationality in our exchanges. It mentions the commitment to dialogic agreement in addressing social issues, the importance of rational argument, and the rejection of relativism. It also introduces the idea of two types of rationality - instrumental and communicative.

In essence, both underscored the role of communication and rationality in societal interactions, putting emphasis on ethical considerations in communication and discourse. Habermas's ideas highlighted the ethical tinge in communicative action, mutual recognition of validity claims, and the moralization process in the lifeworld. This aligns with the emphasis on rational argument, commitment to dialogic agreement, and the rejection of relativism. The works of Habermas implied the morality that lies with communicative actions and the colonization of the lifeworld in instrumental actions of communication. It shows that communication should be guided by ethical principles, with a focus on rationality and the consideration of others' perspectives.

### **Communication is Constitutive of Organization**

The operationalized meaning of organizational communication is the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and shared goals (Hahn and Paynton, n.d.). Organizational communication relies heavily on the context and culture of the

organization, with individuals utilizing various channels such as face-to-face, written, and mediated communication (ibid). It can be discerned that communication in an organization is a commodity for it to succeed and achieve its goals. Effective communication is imperative to foster synergy that builds mutual relationships among employees in order to thrive in an organization's volatile environment.

Organization and communication can be viewed through different lenses of what is called schools of thought, namely, the Functional School (FS) of Thought (communication occurs in organization), the Interpretative/Critical School (I/CS) of Thought (communication produces organization), and the Montreal School (MS) of Thought (communication constitutes organization).

The second lens, I/CS, views organizations not as structures made of positions and roles but of communication activities, a series of creations or contestations of meanings. In short, communication here produces organization. According to Weick, communication here has an organizing nature since people construct organizations through a continuing communication process. This means when people go through their day-to-day interaction, their (communication) activities create organization. Their behaviors are interlocked since one person's behavior is contingent on that of others (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

This is consistent with what Mark Koschmann shared in his YouTube video about organizational communication. He explained that communication literally constitutes or makes up our social world. He furthered that organizational communication is more

than just the exchange of information; instead, it is an actual engagement in a complex process of meaning and negotiating views produced by the people involved.

Drawing from the I/CS perspective, organization here may be seen as fluid/liquid that takes shapes and forms through sensemaking by interacting with each other within and outside their environment. Organization members muddle through complexities, perceive over time what works, and collectively reduce equivocality and make sense of their workplace (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Under the I/CS of Thought, structures and networks are a product of interactions between people as well as their relationships. This shows that structure is not only emergent and fluid, but it also highlights the multiplicity of it. Additionally, the I/CS perspective recognizes that organizational culture is shaped by the communication among individuals and their relationships, giving rise to a subjective reality.

Supporting this perspective, the U.S. Department of Labor emphasizes the significance of communication competency as the most crucial skill for success in the 21st-century workforce (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills). The Public Forum Institute also asserts that employees need to possess skills in public presentation, active listening, and interpersonal communication to thrive within an organization.

To put into context, the focus organization takes necessary steps to adapt to the changing external environment. They do this by planning and executing changes and improvements to policies and procedures. In executing the changes, intensive planning takes place where the members of the organization engage in a series of regroups like meetings and brainstorming to discuss action plans appropriate to the needs and

improvements identified. This means the organization is in constant production and reproduction of communication.

### **Organizational Communication**

The subfield of organizational communication has made significant contributions to our comprehension of the constitutive role of communication in organizations (Mark, 1996). It developed in reaction to functionalism's shortcomings and embraced interpretivism in the 1980s to explore the intricate dynamics of corporate communication.

Organizational communication, according to Mark (1996), sees organizations as living cultures in which interactions with internal and external stakeholders, rituals, myths, and subcultures are all sustained through communication.

According to Herndon and Kreps (1993), qualitative research in organizational communication has shed light on a number of topics, such as the roles that people play, metaphors that are employed, worker identification procedures, and the subtleties of corporate culture.

Miller et al. (2011) highlight the scholars in this discipline have illuminated organizational socialization, commitment, leadership, ethics, technology adoption, diversity management, and innovation through the use of qualitative approaches. According to these research, communication has a dynamic role in influencing group dynamics, individual behavior, and the corporate story as a whole.

Additionally, organizational difficulties have been discovered and addressed by qualitative research in the field of organizational communication, which has led to a reevaluation of the dominant organizational cultures.

Organizational communication highlights how communication can be an effective instrument in shaping an organization's identity and operations. It emphasizes how communication can be more than just a way to convey information and how crucial internal relationships, stories, and interpretations are to an organization's survival and development.

### **Challenges Brought About by the Pandemic**

The impact of the COVID-19 was truly prominent in organizations and their employees, particularly in their communication. Employees are now required to have new (communication) abilities due to the transition to remote work and the growing requirement for digital technology (Clapp, 2021; Lameris & Moumoutzis, 2021).

The pandemic also caused changes in organizational priorities and customer or client needs, necessitating that staff members learn new skills in order to satisfy these changing expectations. In order to adjust to the shifting environment, organizations have had to reorient their plans and methods of operation, which frequently entails creating new channels of communication within their workforce. Businesses that were primarily dependent on face-to-face contacts, for instance, needed to come up with creative ways to interact with clients online and provide their goods or services from a distance. As a result, employees had to acquire capabilities in customer relationship

management, virtual communication, and digital marketing (Lameras & Moumoutzis, 2021).

Organizations recognized the need to revisit their current frameworks and communication strategies to align with the changing requirements and realities of work. Communication adaptation strategies that focus on knowledge, skills, and behaviors are required for successful performance in specific roles or functions. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of digital competencies, adaptability, resilience, virtual collaboration, and other relevant skills in these frameworks (Lameras & Moumoutzis, 2021). In fact, the pandemic accelerated organizations' adoption of the 4th Industrial Revolution as people are compelled to utilize and rely on digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data, and many more (Marr, 2021).

To support the staff during trying times, leadership emerged as an important factor, showing how innovative work practices and preparedness to organizational changes are positively impacted by empowered leadership, and that these factors can lead to sustained economic success (Daniali et al., 2022). Supervisors who enable their staff members through independence, resources, and assistance can foster an atmosphere that encourages education, creativity, and the acquisition of new skills.

Higher education universally shifted to emergency online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Clapp, 2021). Because online teaching differs greatly from the in-person counterpart, staff development was necessary during this transition. Clapp also noted how staff members who had linkages to online learning and teaching communities—

whether from previous experience as online students, training, or experienced staff—were able to move more easily than those who did not.

This highlights the significance of digital competencies for instructors by indicating that the development of competencies in online teaching is influenced by people's relationships and experiences with online learning communities (Lameras & Moumoutzis, 2021). To teach in a variety of settings, such as blended learning, remote learning, and in-person instruction, teachers need to acquire new and updated digital skills. Rethinking digital education requires addressing the risks and challenges of digital teaching and learning, including digital resources, quality, equality, ethics, pedagogy, and digital inclusion (Lameras & Moumoutzis, 2021). This supports the notion that the pandemic necessitated the rethinking of digital education and emphasizes the need for agile communication strategies and the acquisition of digital skills to adapt to changing modes of teaching and the unique challenges of online or hybrid learning environments.

Organizational readiness for change was found to be influenced by innovative work practices and empowered leadership (Daniali et al., 2022). This discovery is applicable to the context of agile communication during a crisis, even though it is not directly related to the pandemic. Employee innovation in the workplace, including the development of new skills and the ability to adjust to changing conditions, is greatly aided by leadership, support, and empowerment (Daniali et al., 2022). This reinforces the need for companies to be prepared to accept change and assist their people to survive in the unstable environment, which led to a review and redesign of the current

organizational processes and structures in response to the difficulties provided by the pandemic.

Gunter (2022) made note of how communication media influenced people's opinions and actions during the pandemic. Similarly, Cherkasova (2021) pointed out that the transition to digital platforms as the main means of communication altered the way messages are sent and spurred the creation of new methods for doing so.

With that, it is assumed that McLuhan's theory of "The Medium is the Message" may provide further light on how digital communication platforms affect contextualizing agile communication, particularly during trying times like the pandemic. Digital communication channels like email, instant messaging, and video conferencing not only make communication easier, but they also have the power to influence the content and flow of the communications that are sent.

Due to the early days of videoconferencing's reliance on digital media, competencies in non-verbal communication, virtual presence, effective presenting skills, clear and concise writing, digital etiquette, and information sharing have become increasingly important (Panteli & Dawson, 2002). Understanding the influence of communication media can offer valuable insights for organizations seeking to optimize their training programs in a digital-first or hybrid work environment.

### **Group Communication**

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected organizations and their communication dynamics (Clapp, 2021; Lamas & Moumoutzis, 2021). Remote work

and digital technology reliance have necessitated new communication skills among employees, impacting individual and group organizational communication. Group Communication, a crucial aspect of organizational communication, has evolved due to the pandemic. Scholars like Frey advocated using interpretivism to revitalize group communication research in the mid-1990s, acknowledging that traditional quantitative methods may not fully capture the complexities of rapidly changing group dynamics (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Qualitative methods have gained prominence in studying group communication, enabling researchers to explore diverse group types and communication practices. These methods validate and extend existing theories while also generating new insights, but they come with challenges, such as accessing groups and addressing online dynamics in remote work settings (ibid).

The field of group communication now emphasizes the importance of understanding how groups adapt and communicate within changing contexts. Recent studies, like one examining an Italian string quartet, illustrate how qualitative methods unveil the nuances of group interactions, contributing to our understanding of communication within organizations (ibid).

Organizations recognize that effective group communication is essential for productivity and collaboration in the pandemic's new communication landscape. Therefore, the study of group communication, particularly through qualitative methods, has gained significance.

## **Organizational Agility**

The Organizational environment is ever-changing, described as D'VUCAD (Diversity, Volatile, Complex, Ambiguous, and Disruption) (Joshi, 2019) and BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible) (Electronico, 2021). Although the former (VUCA) has long been used to describe the rapidity of the changing environment (two Ds were recently added with the onset of the pandemic), the latter goes a step forward by taking into consideration the chaotic and unpredictable environment, which may create disruptions on organization's operations. The environmental challenges prompted organizations to be adaptive – acting rapidly and effectively by implementing strategies and allocating resources (Fjeldstad, 2012).

The concern about how organizations can successfully overcome the complexities, unpredictability, and dynamism caused by the ever-changing world has been ongoing for decades now. The concept of agility has long been introduced way back (Kuhl & Kühl, 2017) and is not a new concept, although it remains a buzzword and remains a current management trend (Cram and Newell, 2016). Schoch et al. (2018) defined agility as pivoting and quickly responding to changes.

Organizational agility is the capability of an organization to respond and take advantage of the changing internal and external environment (Zerfaß, 2018). Being agile includes identifying relevant changes, responding proactively and efficiently, and employing the right employee based on their competence and not on rank or position. Agility also is the ability to implement flexible processes apropos to the task at hand in the shortest possible time (ibid). To be an agile organization, there are six factors,

according to Zerfaß (2018), that must be aligned: structures and processes, culture and people, and (communication) tools and technologies.

Further putting these factors into context, each is looked at through a more focused lens. Firstly, agile communication within the context of organizational agility entails reevaluating communication practices to match modern technologies and empower employees, as suggested by Kaak (2017). Empowering principles should replace traditional structures, fostering transparency, trust, and openness. Hummel et al. (2013) highlight the significance of informal communication in agile systems development, emphasizing the need for future research to explore communication frequency and quality in agile contexts. Secondly, culture and people also play crucial roles in effective agile communication practices. As Bhalerao & Ingle (2010) pointed out, it is essential to have active communication to build trust and enhance the quality of work in an agile environment. Lastly, as Yagüe et al. (2016) highlighted, tools and technologies in agile communication capitalize on using media tools that simulate co-location for effective information sharing among distributed teams. Thus, the factors that enable organizational agility and agile communication encompass replacing obsolete structures, fostering a culture of active communication, and utilizing appropriate communication tools to support agility.

The role of communication in agile organizations, especially in the times of the pandemic, has been underscored. It covers beyond the utilization of virtual communication (communication that is delivered via computer, smartphone, or other automated device (Khan, 2021)) and digital technologies (emails, websites, social media, videoconferencing (Epitech, 2023)) considering the rapidly changing

environment. This is why best communication practices can help the organization communicate more effectively and responsibly, not only during a pandemic but also during “normal times.”

### **Staff Experiences and Agile Communication**

The use of staff experiences in understanding agile communication is a crucial area of exploration. Positive and negative experiences significantly influence the essence of agile communication among staff members (Macías et al., 2018; Rohana & Abdullah, 2017). These experiences can lead to the discovery of a better understanding of the central phenomena.

Understanding the staff experiences, particularly within this international educational organization, can be a pioneering effort to contextualize agile communication as a concept. The term agile started in software development (Handscomb et al., 2021) but now includes many efforts to work faster and more effectively in teams to prevent silos (ibid). The general meaning of agile communication is limited to reducing the steps required to get the message or information across (Lucid Chart, 2023). It is a minimalist approach to documenting big data where agile documents convey information at a glance (ibid). Furthermore, efficient information management is one of the main factors in project success by improving the way decisions are made and, as a result, boosting the company's results (Plessius et al., 2012).

Due to the changes in the environment, the term agile communication may have also evolved. By acknowledging and leveraging the experiences of staff members, organizations in the field of educational research, innovation, and technology may put

a new meaning and essence to this concept, reflecting the evolving needs and concerns in the environment. This approach supports the Center's mission, vision, and objectives aligned with being agile in project management and overall organizational structure and processes. In fact, in other industries, the meaning of agile communication has been evolving. Agile Manifesto (of software development) put a central focus on communication where interactions and collaboration were underscored (Beedle et al., 2001):

*“We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work, we have come to value:*

*Individuals and **interactions** over processes and tools,*

*Working software over comprehensive documentation,*

*Customer **collaboration** over contract negotiation*

*Responding to change by following a plan*

*That is, while there is value in the items on the right,*

*we value the items on the left more.”*

Manifesto’s literal meaning, according to Merriam-Webster, is “a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or **views** of its issuer,” and views are immanent to experiences.

### **Other Applications of Organizational Agility**

Seiffert-Brockmann et al. (2021) emphasized the move toward content-centered approaches in corporate communication, which is consistent with the changing terrain

of agile communication, in a study concerning agile content management. The study's findings, which are based on interviews with communication professionals, show how agile-like concepts are embraced by strategic communication management in order to adapt to increasing complexity and communicative needs, and how content-driven tactics are prioritized over departmentalized specialization. Additionally, their examination of the effects of flattening hierarchies and the difficulties these modifications present highlights the importance of organizational environments in influencing people's experiences, especially during emergency situations or when working remotely.

In connection with this, Schmidtner et al.'s paper on Agile Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2021) provides insightful information. They emphasized how the COVID-19 epidemic required a major change in work methods, placing a strong emphasis on digital tools for distant cooperation. This shift in the nature of work offers a practical framework for comprehending how agile communication was applied and contextualized in a crisis. They also emphasized how, during the pandemic, organizations adjusted to meet the requirements of society. The study's conclusions about the usefulness of digital technologies and efficient teamwork in remote work settings also shed light on how organizational contexts were affected by crisis situations and remote work situations.

Setiawan et al. (2021) conducted a study on the effect of agile leadership and digital communication on employee work motivation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The study offers a practical framework for comprehending the application and development of agile communication practices in a crisis situation. In order to demonstrate how

these components compose agility and its effect on motivation, the study identified contributing aspects that influence employee motivation. These characteristics include agile leadership style and digital communication technologies. Additionally, by looking at pandemic employee experiences, the study clarifies how businesses affect employee experiences in times of crisis.

Finally, Bovsh et al. (2021) looked at staff behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of the hotel and restaurant industry, including flexibility and rationality in management strategies. They clarified the ways in which agile methods and leadership affected employee behavior. The study also looks into the variables that influenced staff behavior. It highlights also how adaptable management techniques can instill values in employees and enhance collaboration, which adds to our analysis of staff motivational kinds and Agile approach selection techniques. Additionally, by concentrating on organizational contexts during crises, it offers recommendations for how businesses might change to survive both during and after the pandemic.

### **Phenomenological Research in Organizational Studies**

When it comes to documenting the lived experiences of employees and offering deep, nuanced insights into their interactions with the organization and its structures, phenomenological research is particularly helpful in comprehending experiences within an organizational environment. With this method, researchers can investigate people's subjective viewpoints and experiences to understand the underlying themes and meanings of their behaviors.

The emphasis on characterizing and interpreting people's first-hand experiences is one of phenomenology's main advantages (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Isnawan & Sudirman, 2022). Using qualitative techniques, researchers can explore the subjective realm of persons and understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This is important in work where experiences influence motivation, engagement, and general output.

Researchers can explore the lived and contextual components of experiences by delving deeper than surface observations with phenomenological research (Fisher & Robbins, 2015). This emphasizes the importance of physicality in high-risk situations while acknowledging the role one's presence plays in leadership effectiveness. Through investigating how people's physical reactions and behaviors influence their leadership styles, scholars can further comprehend leadership dynamics in particular situations.

Phenomenological study can shed light on how staff members view and interact with agile communication within the context of the emerging phenomena. By analyzing their personal experiences, researchers can learn about the meaning people attach to it, the difficulties they face, and the methods they use to deal with initiatives including agile communication. Organizations gain better understanding of staff experiences through this in-depth investigation, which can help them perceive and use agile communication in a way that is in line with people's needs and motivations.

By analyzing the real-world applications of an organizational phenomena, phenomenological research also contributes to closing the gap between theory and practice (Isnawan & Sudirman, 2022; Clapp, 2021). It provides a chance to investigate

the context-specific elements affecting employees' experiences with agile communication. The creation of tailored interventions, such as coaching methods or training plans, that cater to the particular difficulties encountered by employees, can also be influenced by this knowledge.

The application of phenomenology within the realm of organizational studies benefits from the interpretive nature of communication, particularly evident in Group Communication and Organizational Communication. Both of these subfields share interpretive perspectives, aligning seamlessly with the foundational principles of phenomenology as an interpretive approach (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Group communication and the idea of agile communication are strongly related. Agile communication is one of the study's main themes. As previously mentioned, the study acknowledges that staff member communication is changing and now includes agile communication in addition to virtual communication. Similar to Frey's notion from the mid-1990s, which suggested that qualitative methodologies may broaden the scope of group communication research, this study recognizes the changing nature of communication inside businesses (ibid). This calls for the development of fresh strategies and techniques to look at this phenomenon from a qualitative perspective. This is consistent with the focus of phenomenology on investigating the essences and meanings of experiences, therefore the interpretive viewpoint of group communication is a fitting addition to the phenomenological investigation.

The study also emphasizes how important qualified employees are to providing cutting-edge learning services. This aligns with the ideas from Organizational Communication,

which compare cultures inside organizations that are defined by customs, narratives, and interpersonal connections. How employees communicate in virtual and agile environments reflect the culture of the company. Qualitative study on organizational communication that explores identities, roles, and underlying complexities inside the organization can shed light on the complex dynamics of communication in educational research, innovation, and technological settings. Phenomenological research, with its focus on the lifeworld and individuals' experiences, can be enriched by drawing from these insights to understand how communication practices intersect within an international education organization's culture.

To drive the point home, agile communication refers to the capacity to quickly modify communication tactics in reaction to evolving situations. In the same way that interpretive perspectives in Organizational Communication challenge established notions, agile communication challenges traditional communication approaches by advocating for adaptable and flexible communication strategies, acknowledging their crucial role in navigating today's dynamic and rapidly changing environments. This resonates with the transformative power of interpretivism highlighted in Organizational Communication, where researchers adopted interpretive approaches to reframe conventional understandings of "organization."

### **Husserl's Phenomenology and Its Application**

As an epistemological philosophy, Husserl's phenomenology places a strong emphasis on the lifeworld and conscious experiences in order to structure subjectivity and consciousness (Fisher & Robbins, 2015). By proposing the concept of "embodied consciousness," Merleau-Ponty expanded on this theory by emphasizing the

relationship between the body, the lifeworld, and consciousness (Fisher & Robbins, 2015). Additionally, Merleau-Ponty noted that humans never truly experience what they truly do. Researchers can investigate the lifeworld and comprehend the meanings and structures ingrained in personal experiences by using phenomenology (Moran, 2000).

Applying phenomenology to organizational behavior helps illuminate people's experiences navigating challenging circumstances, such as technological advancements. According to Moran (2000), intentionality—a notion developed by Husserl—allows researchers to concentrate on and comprehend the reality of conscious experiences. According to Large (n.d.), intentionality has two sides: the noesis (structural description) and the noema (textural description). Intentionality is defined as acting consciously or instinctively. Noema should not be confused with the object, even though it is immanent to the noesis; noetic is what provides meaning to the impermanent object of consciousness through the stance that the pure ego upholds (ibid). Cilesiz (2010) states that noesis, or the act of experiencing, is perceiving, feeling, or thinking, whereas noema, or the object of the action, is the perceived, felt, or thought. By using this strategy, the researcher can obtain deep insights into the viewpoints on agile communication and the lived experiences of the organization's workers. Phenomenology's purpose is to remain focused on the content within the noesis itself and refrain from making dogmatic statements about reality (Large, n.d.). Further explanations on how this knowledge is utilized in this study are available under the conceptual framework.

According to Husserl, the concept of the lifeworld encompasses the everyday experiences that individuals passively live through (Moran, 2000). By examining the

lifeworld, researchers can uncover the structures and meanings attached to specific roles within organizational contexts. This understanding of the lifeworld enables researchers to explore the professional experiences of the staff members on their understanding of agile communication.

The reduction procedure (also known as epoche or bracketing) is used to carry out rigorous phenomenological investigation. This approach entails putting away assumptions, judgments, views, and prejudices regarding the study issue, as Moran (2000) clarified. By employing the reduction process, researchers can maintain a neutral perspective and delve into the essence of the experiences being studied. It makes it possible to examine staff members' actual experiences in an international education organization in a more transparent and objective manner.

To summarize, Husserl's phenomenology offers a philosophical framework for comprehending lifeworld, conscious experiences, and the process of reduction to determine the essence of a phenomena. With it, researchers can investigate the meanings and perceptions associated with certain circumstances, as well as the lived experiences of individuals inside organizations. Our comprehension of organizational behavior is improved, and phenomenological viewpoints support agile communication and organizational development (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Moran, 2000).

## **Chapter III**

### **RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **Research Framework**

This study is anchored on the Phenomenological Tradition of Communication Theory, where communication is theorized as a dialogue or experience of otherness (Craig, 1999). It locates meaning in the essence of experience-- the "what is it like" knowledge (Saludadez, 2021). In this tradition, communication is theorized through the use of meta-discursive vocabularies such as experience, self and other, dialogue, genuineness, supportiveness, and openness (ibid.). In this tradition, an aspect that renders communication plausible is that all need human contact, treating others as persons, respecting differences, and seeking common ground (Craig, 1999). For communication to succeed, individuals must engage in continuous dialogic interactions to achieve mutual understanding and common ground. As such, individuals need to treat each other as persons, not as things, and it is important to acknowledge and respect differences in order to learn from others and avoid polarization and strategic dishonesty in human relations (Craig, 1999).

One of the key strengths of phenomenological research as a methodology is its focus on describing and interpreting the first-person experience of individuals (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Isnawan & Sudirman, 2022). This study finds its alignment with this tradition as a theory and methodology as its process underscores the importance of experience and dialogue in understanding a phenomenon. Agile communication of the staff members in this international educational organization is assumed to be grounded in their experiences and their dialogic interactions. This study sought to understand

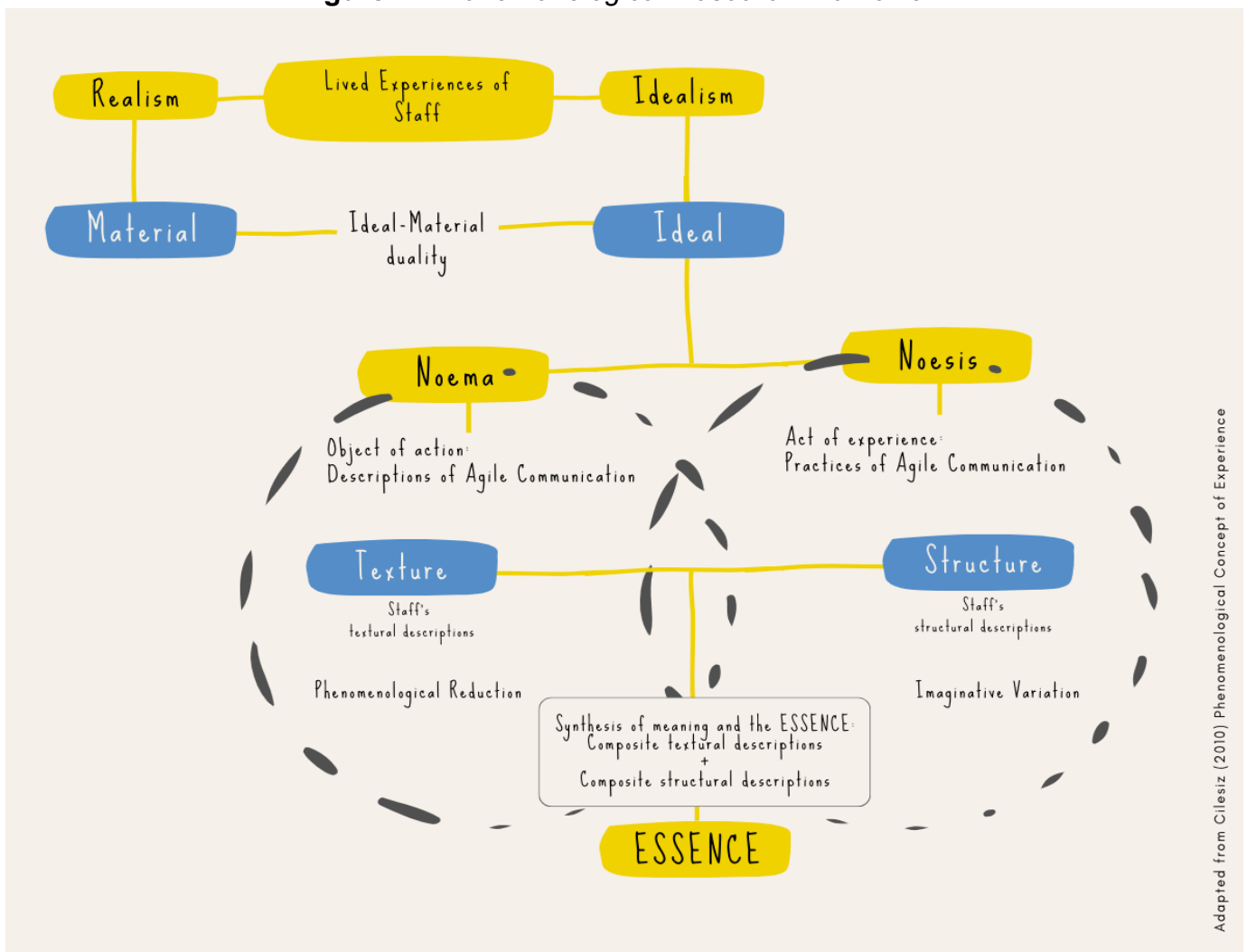
how, through their descriptions and practices, they contextualized the phenomenon under study. Within the Phenomenological Tradition, this study treated agile communication as a concept of authentic human experience produced through dialogic interactions to navigate the complexities in their environment. This involved looking at how individuals described and practiced agile communication and how they managed to maintain their lifeworld, avoiding the system to colonize it, consistent with Habermas' typology.

Phenomenological Tradition is concerned with communication problems concerning sustaining authentic human relationships. Authentic human relationships are important factors in maintaining an individual's lifeworld. In understanding how individuals describe and practice agile communication, their communicative actions were also examined. In Habermas' theory of communicative rationality, he argues that rationality is tied to social interactions and dialogue. According to him, communicative actions are dialogical interactions promoting common understanding where shared meaning exists. According to Habermas (1981), this is what consists of people's lifeworld, the day-to-day world people share with others. If individuals engage in continuous genuine communicative actions in an environment free from power and other constraints, it can be a fundamental step in decolonizing the lifeworld.

This study is undertaken within the Interpretive School of Organizational Communication. It views organizations not as structures made of positions and roles but of communication activities, a series of creations or contestations of meanings (Deetz, 2001). Drawing from the I/CS perspective, the organization under study as an organization may be seen as fluid/liquid that takes shapes and forms through their communicative actions and sensemaking by interacting with each other within and

outside their environment. Organization members muddle through complexities, perceive over time what works, and collectively reduce equivocality and make sense of their workplace (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

**Figure 1. Phenomenological Research Framework**



This framework, as adopted from the works of Cilesiz (2010), tries to explain the concepts of phenomenology as a methodology, material-ideal duality, noema, and noesis and how essences are derived from them from the participants' experiences. Quoting Cilesiz (2010), "The concept of reality in phenomenology is based on the material-ideal duality; every experience has a material and ideal component." Despite

their separation, the interrelation between ideas and material is crucial in deriving meaning within the context of phenomenological experiences. People give meaning to physical things depending on their consciousness. Husserl (1970) explained that *“individual consciousness already contains in itself objective content and that objective content is the basis of intersubjectivity.”* To reach the objective content, we use the reduction method or epoche by setting aside everything that is external (i.e., prejudices) and concentrating only on the inner content of the conscious actions. That is, what is remembered in the act of remembering or what is perceived in the act of perceiving.

In the figure, the yellow rectangles represent the elements, while the blue ones denote the concepts. The explanations are adapted from the original works of Cilesiz (2010), although some elements are modified in the context of the phenomenon under study. The object of the phenomena here is the participants' descriptions of agile communication, while the subject is the selected staff members as participants in this study. Through this, the study will investigate how agile communication practices will depend on the selected staff members. The act of experience or the meaning of the essence will surface after imaginative variation. Going a level deeper, Neubauer et al. (2019) noted that the essence of a phenomenon can be described by exploring the perspective of those who have experienced it or using the “participants' experiences to develop an understanding of the essence of a phenomenon.” In other words, essence, by itself, refers to people's experience. According to Moustakas (1994), it is a phenomenological process that follows phenomenological reduction, which depends purely on the imagination of the researcher rather than the empirical data. Possible meanings are sought through the imagination process (Moustakas, 1994):

*“The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles or functions. The aim is to arrive at a structural description of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the ‘how’ that speaks to conditions that illuminate the what of an experience.”*

Under the structural descriptions, the imaginative variation will be done where it is assumed to surface the act of experience or the meaning of the essence of the phenomenon of agile communication.

Additionally, the data gathered was coded using Habermas’ truth claim and Searle’s speech acts. This establishes the validity of utterances and how participants conveyed the information and the intentions attached to it. Truth claims and speech acts also played a crucial role in rationalizing the discourse being inquired. This was further discussed in the review of related literature.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The lack of a comprehensive and communication-centric definition of agile communication is problematic in itself. By not exploring the profound meaning of agile communication and its role, organizations miss the opportunity to understand the relevance of the phenomenon to the organization and its people. Therefore, there is an imperative need to understand agile communication at an organizational level,

reflecting its communication dimensions and ensuring its relevance in the context of evolving social and organizational landscapes.

To address this challenge, this study aimed to understand how staff members contextualize agile communication within their roles and responsibilities. Examining their experiences and perceptions helped develop a more comprehensive and communication-focused understanding of agile communication.

The process of adjusting communication strategies within an international educational organization presented several challenges and requires careful consideration. One key challenge was the need to align communication with the organization's evolving needs while maintaining its staff's lifeworld, particularly in response to external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has significantly disrupted the educational landscape, necessitating changes in teaching and learning approaches, as well as offering institutions a rare chance to transform various aspects, including strategies, partnerships, teaching methods, student pathways, recruitment, incentives, faculty expertise, assessment, and overall goals, (Marmolejo & Groccia, 2022).

As the organization strives to provide innovative and technology-oriented learning services, it becomes essential to ensure that its staff members possess the necessary agile communication skills to carry out their roles effectively while maintaining their personal/social lives. However, identifying and defining these in the context of an evolving work environment can be complex. It requires a comprehensive understanding of the changing educational landscape and emerging needs and examining the lifeworld of the employees.

By addressing these challenges and defining agile communication practices, the organization can enhance its staff members' ability to navigate the changing educational paradigm and effectively communicate in the DVUCAD or BANI world (Bergener et al., 2012). Without a clear understanding of agile communication, there is a risk of ineffective communication practices that may hinder the center's ability to fulfill its mission of providing innovative and technology-oriented learning services within and beyond the region, as well as disrupt the balance in the personal and social life of the employees.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the staff's contextualization and utilization of agile communication, with a focus on understanding their evolving communicative practices not just for the organization's success but also in maintaining the staff's lifeworld. By gaining insights into how staff members described and practiced agile communication in response to the challenges brought about by the pandemic and the changing educational landscape, this research sought to contribute to the development of communication-centric agile communication descriptions and practices.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study's objective delved into the subjective perspectives, adaptations, challenges, and successes experienced by staff members in their personal/social and organizational lives. This is in order to clearly understand the contextual explanations and the meaning behind their actions. Exploring this muted/marginalized voice contributes to the overall knowledge of agile communication in an organizational context.

Specifically, it aimed to uncover the staff members' specific knowledge, skills, and values, uncovering their understanding of agile communication. Finally, it sought to investigate how personal/social and organizational factors affect the staff members' experiences in terms of agile communication.

1. Describe how staff members define agile communication based on their experiences in the context of an international educational organization.
2. Understand how the staff members practice and share these descriptions of agile communication.
3. Identify the essence of agile communication among the staff members of an international educational organization.

### **Research Questions**

Following these research objectives, the following research questions were derived:

1. What meaning of agile communication is described by staff members based on their experiences?
2. How are these descriptions of agile communication practiced and shared by the staff members?
3. What is the essence of agile communication in an agile international educational organization?

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Understanding Agile Communication as a Communication Phenomenon**

This study addresses the need for a comprehensive and communication-centric understanding of agile communication within the context of an international educational organization. By exploring the lived experiences of staff members and their perceptions

of agile communication, this research aims to uncover the meaning, contextualization, and utilization of agile communication as a communication phenomenon. This understanding can contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks and practical insights that enhance communication strategies within organizations.

### **Advancing Knowledge in Organizational Communication**

This study contributes to the academic literature on organizational communication by focusing on agile communication. It provides insights into the dynamic and evolving nature of communication practices in the context of organizational change and crisis situations. The findings can inform scholars and practitioners about the role of communication in navigating challenges, fostering collaboration, and adapting to new modes of work, especially in the virtual space.

### **Enhancing Communication Strategies in Organizations**

The study's findings can have practical implications for organizations, particularly in terms of enhancing their communication strategies and maintaining staff's lifeworld. By understanding how staff members contextualize and utilize agile communication, organizations can gain valuable insights into effective communication practices that promote flexibility, collaboration, and innovation. The study may provide guidance for organizations seeking to improve their communication approaches in response to changing environments and emerging challenges.

### **Informing Organizational Adaptation and Resilience**

In times of crises and uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations face the need to adapt and ensure their resilience. Agile communication

plays a vital role in facilitating effective communication and maintaining organizational continuity. This study contributes to understanding how organizations navigated communication challenges and adapted their practices to ensure effective communication, collaboration, and employee well-being. The findings can provide valuable insights and lessons for organizations seeking to enhance their adaptive capacity and resilience.

### **Promoting Inclusivity and Reducing Inequalities in Digital Transformation**

The study aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 4: Quality Education. By exploring how the staff utilized Agile Communication strategies, the study aims to provide insights into reducing disparities and bridging the digital divide. Understanding how communication practices have evolved and how staff members have adapted in response to the pandemic can inform the development of inclusive communication strategies that ensure disadvantaged groups are not left behind in the digital transformation of education and work.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of this study focuses on the organization's staff members. It specifically examines their experiences, perceptions, and the significance they attribute to their agile communication experience within the organization. By conducting interviews with staff members, the study aims to gather direct insights and understand their individual realities and subjective perspectives regarding agile communication during the pandemic.

To ensure transparency and acknowledge potential limitations, it is essential to identify and discuss the underlying assumptions guiding this study. The philosophical assumptions discussed by Auriacombe & Holtzhausen (2014) are contextualized within the study as follows:

1. **Ontological Assumptions:** The study is based on the ontological assumption that reality is subjective and multiple, shaped by individual experiences. Recognizing the staff members' diverse perspectives and lived experiences allows for a comprehensive understanding of agile communication.
2. **Epistemological Assumptions:** The study is grounded in the epistemological assumption that knowledge is subjective and constructed through interactions between the researcher and participants. Through dialogical processes such as interviews, the researcher's understanding of staff experiences and agile communication will be co-constructed through shared meaning-making.
3. **Axiological Assumptions:** The study recognizes the axiological assumption that research is value-laden, and both the researcher's and participants' values influence the study. The researcher will openly acknowledge their values and biases, as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field, ensuring transparency and reflexivity in the research process.
4. **Praxiological Assumptions:** The study adopts praxiological assumptions, emphasizing the practical nature and implications of the research. The findings are expected to have practical applications, potentially informing improvements in adaptation strategies concerning agile communication, staff training, and support strategies, as well as organizational culture and change management in an international educational organization.

5. Teleological Assumptions: The study is driven by teleological assumptions, aiming not only to contribute to academic knowledge but also to facilitate improvements in practice and staff wellbeing. It seeks to provide insights that will assist the organization and others like them in better supporting their staff in terms of agile communication, particularly during challenging times like a pandemic.

While these assumptions guide the study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations they present. The findings may have limited generalizability beyond the organization due to its specific context. Additionally, potential biases in data collection and interpretation could influence the outcomes. The use of an inductive approach in the methodology may also limit the study's scope and the range of perspectives considered. However, by recognizing these limitations, the study strives to provide valuable insights within its defined scope while acknowledging the need for further research and contextual considerations about agile communication across different organizations.

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, specifically phenomenological qualitative research, to describe and understand the lived experiences of staff members of an international educational organization about agile communication.

#### **Research Design**

As this study's theoretical framework, phenomenology provides a philosophical approach to describing and understanding the phenomenon of agile communication from a first-person perspective based on the lived experiences of selected staff members. It aimed to capture the essence of these experiences and explore how they are subjectively lived and understood. One prominent figure in phenomenology is Edmund Husserl, whose interpretation of phenomenology offers valuable insights into the study of human experiences and consciousness.

Husserl emphasized the concept of the 'lived experience' or 'lifeworld,' which refers to the immediate and subjective experience of individuals as they engage with the world around them (Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Moran, 2000). He believed phenomenology should "go back to the things themselves," emphasizing the importance of examining people's direct experiences without relying on interpretations or explanations (Fisher & Robbins, 2015).

Central to Husserl's phenomenology is the concept of 'intentionality' (noema and noesis), which refers to the inseparability of the subject and object of consciousness (Moran, 2000). According to Husserl, consciousness is always directed towards something, and it is through intentionality that individuals make meaning of their experiences and engage with the world. He said that the structure of essential meanings explains a phenomenon of interest. This focus on intentionality allows the researcher to explore the conscious experiences of individuals and uncover the structures and meanings embedded within them (Moran, 2000).

In applying Husserlian phenomenology to the study of the staff members' experiences and agile communication, the researcher adopted a first-person perspective to capture the lived experiences of the staff members themselves. By exploring their lifeworld and understanding how they navigate their practices of agile communication within an evolving work environment and during a pandemic, the study aimed to uncover the essence of their experiences. Phenomenology served as a good lens to contextualize agile communication, helping the researcher gain profound insights into agile communication, as informed by the lived experiences of the staff members.

The data collection process involved engaging directly with the selected staff members through in-depth interviews that allow them to express their experiences, challenges, and reflections. Marshall and Rossman (2006) posit that phenomenological interviews aim to describe the meaning of a phenomenon that individuals share. The focus will be on understanding their subjective perspectives and capturing the nuances and complexities of their lived experiences. Multiple interviews were done, and as

Moustakas (1994) suggested, the initial interview may start with a social conversation to foster a trusting and relaxing atmosphere.

Through careful data analysis using the concepts of phenomenology, truth claims, and speech acts, the study identified recurring themes, patterns, and the essence of the experiences shared by the staff members, shedding light on the dynamics of practicing agile communication and organizational behavior within the international educational organization.

By adopting a phenomenological approach, this research was able to go beyond surface-level descriptions and delved into the depth and richness of the staff members' experiences. It allowed for a comprehensive understanding of their subjective realities, highlighting the significance of their personal perspectives in the context of agile communication and organizational dynamics.

Another concept that guided this study is the Discourse of Understanding. It provided the underlying structure for the study, guiding the researcher's thinking and analysis. It emphasized the importance of comprehending the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants, which informed the process of data collection and interpretation (Poole, 2019). This concept recognizes knowledge production as a dialogical process (Mumby, 1997) through interviews, aiming to delve into the underlying meanings and essences that emerge from participants' narratives. It aligns with the goal of understanding the participants' lived world and their experiences that contributed to the staff experiences and agile communication.

Phenomenological qualitative research is well-suited for comprehending shared experiences among multiple individuals (Creswell, 2007). The works of Clark Moustakas serve as primary references for this study (Moustakas, 1994). The key assumptions underlying this qualitative approach are:

1. Human experiences cannot be adequately explored using quantitative methods.
2. The focus is on the meanings and essences of experiences rather than measurements and explanations.
3. First-person accounts are vital for gathering descriptions of experiences.
4. Research questions and problems are shaped by the researchers' interests.

In the context of this study, these assumptions imply that a quantitative approach cannot capture the essence of the staff members' agile communication experiences, and their experiences play a significant role in the study. The primary data source is the staff members' lived experiences, and the researcher's interest aligns with the study's main focus.

### **Research Approach**

As mentioned above, the Discourse of Understanding guided this study. This also includes the research approach of the study. As cited earlier, Poole (2019) noted how this approach pertains to the specific methodology and techniques used to conduct the research and collect data. It emphasizes the need to understand participants' lived experiences and perspectives, which informs the data collection and interpretation process. Structured interviews are employed as methods to capture participants' perspectives, motivations, feelings, perceptions, and interpretations. The analysis phase follows the Discourse of Understanding, which allowed to uncover

underlying meanings and essences in the data while respecting and retaining participants' perspectives.

This study's qualitative phenomenological research approach emphasizes understanding participants' lived experiences, knowledge, skills, and values. Lived experience refers to the representation of individuals' experiences, choices, and knowledge gained from those experiences (Given, 2008). The researcher applied transcendental reduction for systematic bracketing of participants' responses and considered intersubjectivity for merging perspectives.

### **Research Participants**

In this study, purposive sampling was utilized. This is a sampling technique where the researcher has the free hand when choosing the members of the study's participants. Black (2010) posits that *“elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher.”* Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving resources (ibid). Creswell (2007) supported this as he explained that phenomenological study requires a homogeneous group of participants; therefore, participants should have experience with the same phenomenon, where the researcher can decide purposively who the participants are to be involved in the data collection of the phenomenon under investigation.

The organization is composed of five (5) offices:

- Office 1: Responsible for financial and administrative management within the organization, ensuring smooth operations and resource allocation.

- Office 2: Focuses on legal matters, quality control, and effective management practices to support the organization's mission.
- Office 3: Dedicated to harnessing and disseminating knowledge while building valuable networks to enhance organizational growth and impact.
- Office 4: Empowers individuals and teams through learning and development initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
- Office 5: Drives innovation and conducts research to advance educational practices and enhance the institution's educational offerings.

Each office has its own role in the organization. These offices are assumed to have their own ways of practicing agile communication; thus, the researcher invited several representatives from each office as participants to gather the data. Although participants work in different offices, they also work collaboratively, given that the organization works in a “projectized” paradigm. They operate in organization-wide, office, unit or small team-level, single or multi-level component, or simple or complex projects. Regardless of their position and rank, anyone may serve as a project's project manager or team member. Thus, participants were chosen not based on ranks and positions but based on their capabilities and deliverables, which informs the frequency of their agile communication utilization. This was objectively identified based on their Performance Development Contract (PDC), where their projects and deliverables within a fiscal year cycle are clearly indicated. This means participants came from both non-international and international positions where participants were treated as co-researchers who have experienced the phenomenon.

## **Ethical Procedures**

In recruiting the participants, their Performance Development Contracts were reviewed. This is to identify their deliverables and projects for the fiscal year objectively. Twelve (12) staff were shortlisted, and the researcher was given the opportunity to work closely on either small and/or large-scale projects. The researcher was able to co-research with them, exploring ideas and concepts, which allowed the researcher to observe their working habits and practices. By working with the participants, the researcher was able to build rapport with them, creating an enabling environment and agency.

Before involving them in the study as Phenomenological Interviewees, the researcher obtained permission from them to discuss with them how the data would be gathered, including the interview recording. The researcher assured them that pseudonyms (code names) will be used for privacy and that the data collected will be used solely for academic purposes. Before the actual interview, all participants signed a written consent for ethical purposes.

The researcher also sought the permission of the organization where the study took place and ensured that all information gathered would be treated with confidentiality.

## **Research Tools and Data Collection**

To provide an answer to the research questions raised earlier, this study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research approach where knowledge production is dialogical using the phenomenological interviewing method. According to Bevan (2014), this interview method employs descriptive and structural questioning and novel

use of imaginative variation to explore experience. He furthered that this approach will help researchers understand how to undertake phenomenological research interviews. Twelve (12) participants were identified to participate while maintaining a social conversation (Moustakas, 1994) that fosters a trusting and relaxing environment.

In qualitative phenomenological research, lived experience refers to a representation of the experiences and choices of a given person and the knowledge they gain from these experiences and choices (Given, 2008). So, this phenomenological interview method is one of the best methods to gather necessary data from the participants. The structure of the method of phenomenological interviewing (Bevan, 2014) is as follows:

**Figure 2. Method of Phenomenological Interviewing**

Phenomenological Attitude	Researcher Approach	Interview Structure	Method	Sample Questions
Phenomenological Reduction ( <i>Epoche</i> )	Acceptance of Natural Attitude of Participants	Contextualization ( <i>Eliciting the Lifeworld in Natural Attitude</i> )	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions	<i>"Tell me something about your agile communicative practices at work. What does it mean for you?"</i>
	Reflexive Critical Dialogue With Self	Apprehending the Phenomenon ( <i>Modes of Appearing in Natural Attitude</i> )	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions of Modes of Appearing	<i>"Tell me about your typical day at work. What procedures (e.g., operation manuals, guidelines, personal procedures) do you use/employ in performing your tasks as a _____ (Unit-Position)? How do these procedures help you in performing your tasks?"</i>  <i>"Please share how you would describe your agile communication practices at work. How do these practices change, for example, during the remote work arrangement?"</i>
	Active Listening	Clarifying the Phenomenon ( <i>Meaning Through Imaginative Variation</i> )	Imaginative Variation: Varying of Structure Questions	<i>"Describe how the team communication would change, if any, when a leader or boss is present."</i>  <i>"Describe how your communicative behavior would change when faced with hurdles or hiccups."</i>

Key concepts of this interview method are description, natural attitude (rich and thick descriptions), lifeworld, modes of appearing, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation, which follows the concept of phenomenological process/concept. According to Bevan (2014), the use of phenomenological reduction allows the researcher to remain faithful to the descriptions of participants' experiences, where they accept that this is how the participants describe their world. He added that this

maintains a “fundamental level of validity.” On the other hand, imaginative variation was explicitly applied by Husserl (1970) and Heidegger (1962) as part of analyzing a phenomenon. The accepted methodological placing of imaginative variation is a part of data analysis (Bevan, 2014). He added that it is “a form of phenomenon reduction in relation to the removal of variant parts and phenomenon clarification” (ibid). Please see Appendix C for the complete list of Phenomenological Interview guide questions.

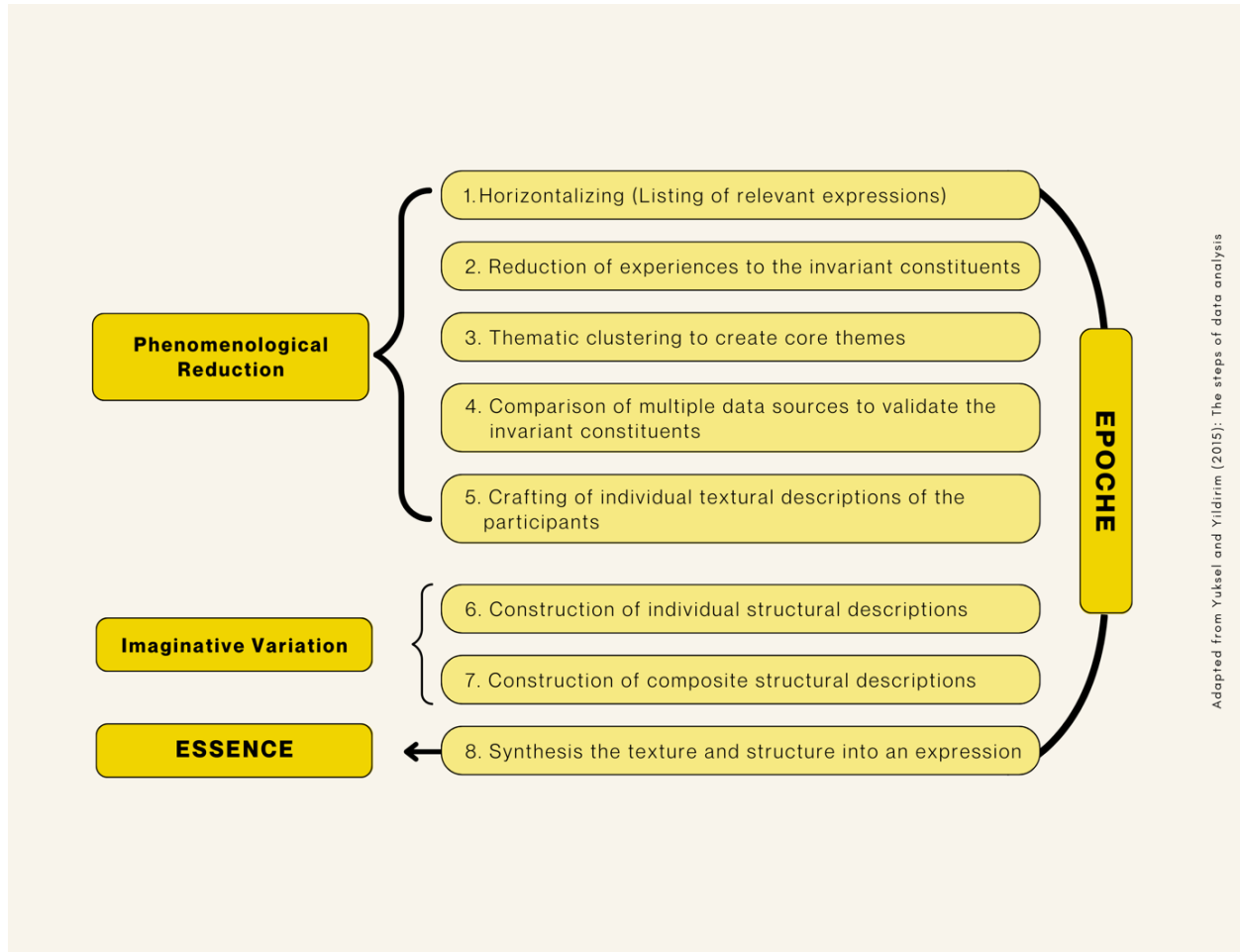
An observation method was also used to observe the research environment and document the participants' rich and thick descriptions. Considering observation as a method in phenomenological research shows its capability to elicit rich and thick descriptions from people's experiences, which by itself is adaptable to both Positivist and Phenomenological frameworks (Erciyes, 2020). Positivist observers maintain objectivity, while Phenomenological researchers engage with respondents, deepening their connection to experiences. Two primary observation categories exist: non-participatory and participatory. Non-participatory observation fits structured methods where the observer remains integral but doesn't participate directly. Participatory observation aligns with constructivist and participatory paradigms, requiring immersion in daily events and unveiling practical and theoretical truths (Jorgensen, 1989). Beyond these foundational types, variations include structured, unstructured, overt, and covert methods. Structured observation follows a plan, focusing on individual behaviors. Unstructured observation captures narratives without rigid schedules (Bryman, 2004). Transparency is crucial in observation. Overt observation discloses the observer's identity, objectives, and intentions, upholding ethics and scientific rigor. Covert observation conceals identity but seeks genuine settings, raising ethical concerns and often being less used (ibid). To sum it up, in phenomenological research, overt or covert

observation enhances exploring lived experiences, yielding nuanced descriptions. This method transcends disciplines, offering a multifaceted lens for understanding human existence. From the data collected, essential themes are assumed to emerge, which will be discussed further in the next part of this paper.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In the analysis phase, the researcher applied phenomenological reduction, which involves systematically horizontalizing and bracketing participants' expressions. Habermas' truth claims and Searle's speech acts, as mentioned, were also utilized to validate the rationality of participants' responses. This process helped to suspend preconceived notions and biases, allowing for a more objective interpretation of the data. Additionally, the concept of intersubjectivity was considered to merge participants' perspectives and understand the collective meaning of their experiences. The figure below describes the data analysis steps as adopted from the work of Yuksel and Yildirim (2015):

**Figure 3. Steps in Phenomenological Data Analysis**



Searching for meaning or essence through the participants' descriptions, as mentioned, starts with phenomenological reduction. Listing of relevant expressions happens during horizontalizing. This is the process where the transcribed data are processed to remove a priori or any forms of suspicion to identify the invariant constituents of the participants' experiences. This is also because not all data transcribed are relevant to the phenomenon under study. After this, the cluster of meaning follows, and the researcher thematizes invariant constituents or the core themes of experience in this process. To validate the invariant constituents, these were compared to multiple data sources, like data results from observations and

investigation of artifacts. Individual textural descriptions of participants, which explain the participants' perception of the phenomenon, will be constructed.

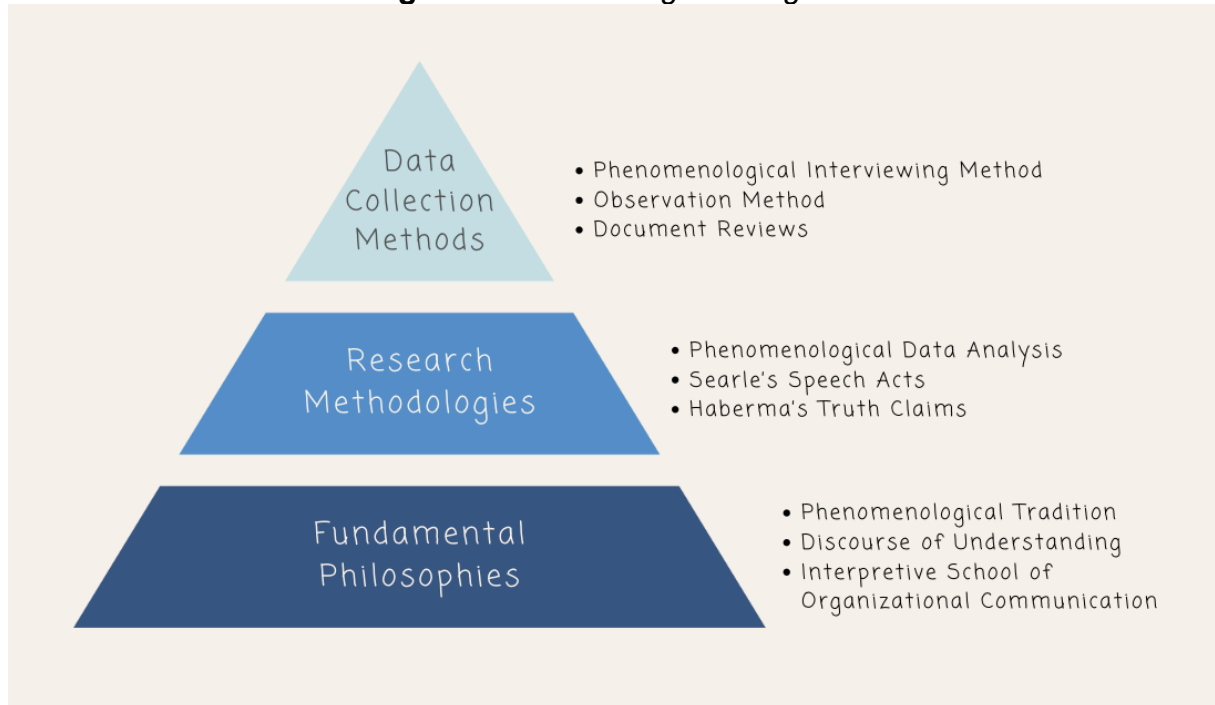
The next stage is imaginative variation, where individual structural description is constructed, and composite structural description construction. Both of these are based on the textural descriptions of the participants; the researcher will imagine here how the experiences occurred and then create the structures.

The last stage is synthesizing the texture and structure into an expression. The researcher creates two narratives, including the phenomenon's textural or the "what" and then the "how" it occurred. By listing the meaning units, the researcher checks for uncommon individual meaning units and eliminates them. By doing this, the research is able to create the essence of the phenomena, synthesizing all of the narratives of the participants.

Moreover, concepts of language pragmatics, such as truth claims and speech acts, were utilized in the coding of the data as they supplied significant perspectives on understanding the experiences of the staff through phenomenology. Identifying truth claims in the staff's utterances established the rationality of their claims, while the speech acts succinctly explained how actions are performed through words.

Husserl's explanation of structural essences, which elucidates the essential meanings that define a phenomenon, is guided by the abovementioned process. By following this process, the essential themes related to the descriptions and practices of agile communication by the staff members were identified.

**Figure 4. Methodological Diagram**



This diagram shows the consistency in the lenses (fundamental philosophies) utilized in this study. The lenses' common ground is focused on the dialogical characteristic of communication as all of them treat communication theorizing as a dialogical interaction/process. This diagram also illustrates that research methodologies emerge from the fundamental philosophies, and data collection methods emerge from research methodologies, all of which are centered on experiences and dialogic social interactions.

### **Plausibility of Findings**

To ensure empirical and theoretical plausibility, the researcher shared the results and findings with the participants, allowing them to make meaning of the data. The study was also checked for consistency with prior literature and related technical publications to establish theoretical plausibility.

## **Chapter V**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Participants' Profile**

Pseudonyms or code names were used for participants who shared their experiences and stories. All participants:

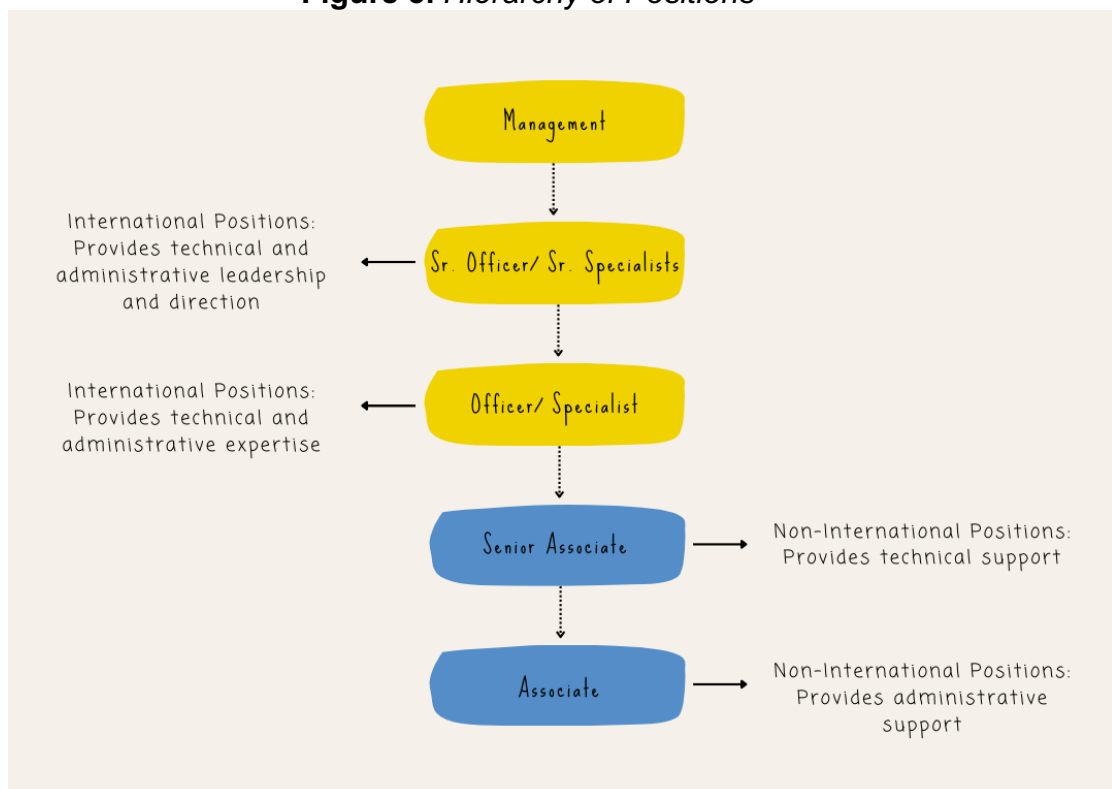
- a. Are employees of an International Educational Organization
- b. Are from different offices with diverse professions and backgrounds; and
- c. Have experienced Agile Communication in delivering and accomplishing their tasks and deliverables.

Participants' table is illustrated below. All data were transcribed, processed, and analyzed for thematic analysis.

**Table 1. Participants' Profile**

	Code Name	Gender	Age	Position	Classification	Tenure
1	PI-ERI-ER	F	44	Research and Innovation Specialist	International Staff	11 years
2	PI-ERI-EI	M	28	Educational Innovation Sr. Associate	Non-International Staff	6 years
3	PI-ERI-EU	F	31	Innovation Associate	Non-International Staff	7 years
4	PI-FAM-FM	F	35	Finance Sr. Associate	Non-International Staff	14 years
5	PI-FAM-HR	F	38	Human Resource Associate	Non-International Staff	12 years
6	PI-KMN-SM	M	49	Systems Admin Sr. Officer	International Staff	24 years
7	PI-KMN-EM	M	45	Educational Media Sr. Officer	International Staff	8 years
8	PI-KMN-IM	M	39	Information Management Sr. Officer	International Staff	16 years
9	PI-KMN-KR	M	30	Knowledge Resource Sr. Associate	Non-International Staff	7 years
10	PI-LDM-LM	F	34	Course Development Specialist	International Staff	6 years
11	PI-LDM-LI	M	31	Course Implementation Sr. Associate	Non-International Staff	3 years
12	PI-LQM-LP	F	24	Legal and Quality Management Associate	Non-International Staff	2 years

**Figure 5. Hierarchy of Positions**



## Examining the Participants' Lifeworld

### PI-ERI-ER

The first phenomenological interviewee is 44 years old. She has been with the organization for 11 years in the research and innovation office. She is a research and innovation specialist whose primary role is conceptualizing, planning, designing, executing, and managing their unit's innovation development programs and projects. Some of her tasks include handling medium to large-scale projects where she leads the preparation of tools, administration, monitoring, and evaluation of the projects. She also provides technical expertise in ensuring that their innovation projects are designed based on the identified priority needs of the stakeholders.

PI-ERI-ER is a mother to a 10-year-old son. While managing work and family life has not become a significant challenge for her during the pandemic; she expressed concerns about her personal relationship with her co-workers. As an international staff who leads project teams, she puts a lot of premium on her personal relationships with her colleagues.

*“Ako I put a lot of premium kasi sa yun nga personal relationships ko. Unang una siguro yung sensitivities, kasi first and foremost hindi mo alam kung ano yung pinagdadaan nung teammates mo. Parang lahat diba, parang konting ma touch mo lang, may isang button ka lang na ma-touch, hindi mo na alam kung ano yung magiging reaction and ano yung pinagdadaan ng mga tao.”*

She shared that she has to be extra careful when communicating with her colleagues since she understands that people can be a bit more sensitive during the pandemic.

She also added that although virtual communication has helped her cope, it has its limitations, too. For example, in the case of utilizing emails and messaging applications, according to her, one cannot be sure of one's emotions attached to the message. While the technology allowed her to continue communicating with her colleagues during the pandemic, it can sometimes be less personal. She expressed some concerns about its effect on her personal relationships with her colleagues, and that's why she made sure that when communicating with them, may it be about work or personal, she exerts extra effort.

*“When you communicate kasi, say, in the email diba? **Di mo alam yung tone ng kausap mo** tapos kailangan mong, ahm... you have to make sure or parang **extra effort in constructing your message to ensure maayos at malinaw siya.**”*

*“As for me, **ayoko nung flowery.** I have learned this from my previous bosses who are trained abroad and some of them are foreigners. **I believe yun yung difference ng Asian to Western communication, mas direct and clear yung communication pag Western, while kapag Asian or Filipino, maraming paligoy-ligoy and explanations.** And I believe in maintaining good personal relationships, importante yung clear mo naco-convey yung message when leading a project team... Kasi hindi ka makaka-work ng maayos kapag hindi maayos ang relationship mo with people.”*

While virtual communication has helped her continue communicating and maintaining relationships with her colleagues during the pandemic, PI-ERI-ER shared that it is more than just utilizing virtual communication in order to maintain harmonious relationships with her colleagues. She underscored the importance of direct and clear communication, which she said she had learned from her Western bosses. In a book

written by Chan (1994), she discussed the difference between American (Western) and Asian (Eastern) leaders' communication. She posits that Western leaders are more direct, while Asian leaders tend to be wordy when communicating. Chan said this could be related to the fact that Asians are not native English language speakers. She added that culture is another important factor to consider when communicating across nations since language and culture go hand in hand.

PI-ERI-ER also believes that open and transparent communication promotes respectful dialogues, allowing them to identify solutions to challenges.

*“When communicating with colleagues, especially in times of conflicts, we strive to keep it open and transparent, **promoting respectful dialogues. We are open to debating with each other and hearing each other’s ideas and opinions, which lead to iterative feedbacking.** Teamwork, creativity, and innovation serve as our backbone for achieving our commitments while maintaining harmonious relationships... We keep in mind that our work contributes to a bigger purpose, which is to help improve the education system in the region. I believe this becomes possible because we share this personal purpose.”*

Building from PI-ERI-ER statements, it shows that aside from the use of digital technologies during the pandemic, her knowledge of open and respectful communication has guided her to maintain good relationships with her colleagues. Keeping her communication direct, constructing messages with the receiver in mind, as well as maintaining open and transparent communication, which fosters respectful dialogues between her and her colleagues allowing her to maintain harmonious organizational and personal relationships with them.

## PI-ERI-EI

The second phenomenological interviewee is a senior associate in educational innovation. He is 28 years old and has been with the organization for six (6) years. He provides technical support in the planning, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of research and innovation initiatives of their unit. He also conducts data gathering, including the preparation of field notes, case studies, anecdotal records, and workshop proceedings. He also prepares technical research reports for R&D projects with technical inputs and guidance from the project lead.

He shared that his tasks continued to be as hectic as they used to be prior to the pandemic. It involves a lot of coordination work with different project teams and stakeholders. In addition, projects within the organization happen simultaneously. This means a staff member may handle or be part of projects at the same time, sometimes as a team member and sometimes as a project lead. He also shared that apart from the coordination work, he also has to accomplish technical work.

*“A typical day at work would **involve a lot of coordination work with different project team members and stakeholders**. Apart from that, much of my time is dedicated to accomplishing more technical work.”*

He said that he uses a digital organizer in order to organize his schedule and deliver his tasks. This helps him manage his work while giving him more time for personal activities, especially since he is also a law student.

*“To ensure that no task falls through the cracks, **I maintain a digital organizer**, which I use on a daily basis to manage my work and personal time. The tasks that go into my daily organizer are, of course, based on my project’s work plan, which details the major deliverables for the project and their*

corresponding timelines. **These tools help me keep my work organized and on schedule.**”

He also shared that there are intervening tasks between what he has scheduled to do in a day, prompting him to adjust his schedules. Most of the time, these intervening tasks include urgent regroupings and meetings.

*“At work, **meetings are either scheduled or called for as needed.***

*So, **we adjust our schedules accordingly.** Many of us make use of digital means of communication, including video conferencing, email, and instant messaging, for faster correspondence. These practices continued during the pandemic when the organization adopted a remote work set-up.”*

One notable sharing of PI-ERI-EI is his manager’s introduction of the daily scrum meeting to their team. He expressed that this kind of meeting has helped their team manage their daily work tasks effectively. They update each other about their respective tasks, which in turn lessen the need for unplanned meetings. Moreover, it maintained their team members’ personal connection as it allowed them to check on each other on a personal level.

*“...my manager for one project introduced a **new practice called “daily scrum meeting”** where we met at the start of each day for around 15 minutes not only to give updates on our respective tasks but also to check in on each other on a more personal level. **This helped the members of the team remain on track and also sustain our personal connections despite being physically away from one another.**”*

The effects of the pandemic appear to be evident in the lifeworld of PI-ERI-EI. Based on his narratives, there are tendencies that his work may overlap with his personal time. Staying committed to delivering his tasks despite the limitations of the physical workspace can be challenging, but through the use of a digital organizer, he can manage his time effectively. Support from leaders appears to be a significant factor in maintaining his lifeworld. While he and his colleagues continue to collaborate on projects through the use of digital technologies, which can be challenging at times, their project manager supports them by allowing them to sustain personal connections through the daily scrum meetings. Through this kind of interaction, a holding or an enabling environment was provided to them. This is where they are still able to connect and maintain their personal relationships, encouraging agency and collaboration. This could also be one of the major factors why PI-ERI-EI continues to be committed to delivering his tasks despite the hurdles encountered in his organization while maintaining harmony in his personal life.

Based on the literature, leadership support and empowerment play a crucial role in encouraging employees to exhibit innovative work behavior, including acquiring new competencies to adapt to changing circumstances (Daniali et al., 2022). PI-ERI-EI and his colleagues are able to balance their work and personal time given the enabling environment and encouragement provided by their manager.

### **PI-ERI-EU**

The third phenomenological interviewee is 31 years old and is an innovation associate. She has been with the organization for seven (7) years. She provides administrative support services to their unit's programs and projects, where she assists

in organizing and handling the administrative requirements. She handles tasks such as coordinating with stakeholders and efficiently providing project logistical requirements. She maintains an orderly and systematic filing system for all their unit's documents, including electronic and printed documents.

PI-ERI-EU is a non-international staff who handles mostly administrative functions. She shared that one of her challenges was when one of their project team members resigned during the height of the pandemic, and she had to take on her colleague's tasks. She was concerned that the additional tasks would add up to her current deliverables.

*“During the pandemic, I am part of a project where **one of the project team members resigned. I had to take on her tasks.** Eh syempre may mga current tasks na ako na inaasikaso.”*

When asked what she did upon learning the situation, she shared that she knew she had to adjust. The adjustment wasn't easy for her at first, given the limitations brought by the pandemic. Thankfully, with their current office practices, she could quickly adapt, avoiding the circumstances affecting her personally.

*“Samin kasi sa office namin **ang practice is even if mag-usap kami verbally kunwari via mobile calls, or mga informal communications tulad ng sa messenger, we make sure to document the conversation,** example via email, ganyan. We prefer to record these conversations para madali rin balikan. **Nale-lesser yung paulit-ulit na tanungan kasi we are on the same page.** Meron kami documentation na naka live-file, and then all people involved have access to it. Updates in the live file are also real-time and accessible anytime you need it.”*

She added that these practices allowed her to transition faster. Since information is readily available and accessible, it served as her basis in performing her tasks. It promoted autonomy for PI-ERI-EU in delivering out her functions. She also shared that these practices allowed her to easily adjust.

***“It became easy for me to adjust. Kasi kahit na nalimit yung physical interactions, di kami nalimit to continue communicating, so essentially may interactions pa rin kami, virtual nga lang. Although syempre, iba pa rin pag face-to-face talaga. Good thing is nadagdagan yung means to communicate. Siguro part na rin ng pagiging innovative natin dito sa Center and hindi tayo nakakahon sticking to certain SOPs. And very important kasi sakin yung may interpersonal interaction, may it be physical or virtual. Mas nagiging madali kasi ang correspondence kapag may interaction, mas madali nakakapagcollaborate, mas mabilis natatapos ang trabaho. It helps me personally din kasi interpersonal interaction is therapeutic for me. I know despite the distance with my colleagues, I know I am not isolated kasi we are connected.”***

She said that she appreciated additional communication channels and that staying connected with her colleagues was therapeutic. During the work-from-home arrangement, the Center encouraged the members of the staff to discover and utilize different digital communication channels that work best for their team/unit. The standard operating procedures do not limit them since they are allowed to innovate to stay connected both for work and personal interactions. She shared that work tends to be accomplished faster, so they can have more time for themselves and their families.

Lifting from the literature, Gunter (2022) pointed out the role of different communication mediums in the pandemic and how they shaped people's views and behaviors. Despite the hurdles encountered, the shift to digital communication platforms as the primary mode of interaction has changed how messages are delivered and influenced people to develop new ways of doing things (Cherkasova 2021) that are consistent with being innovative.

### **PI-FAM-FM**

The fourth phenomenological interviewee is a senior associate for finance and accounting. She's been with the organization for 14 years. She is responsible for the maintenance of accounts and the preparation of the organization's financial statements. She ensures that all accounting information is accurate for management reference. She prepares financial statistics reports annually, which are used to present reports to the management and governing board. She also ensures that the organization's financial statements and activities comply with the BIR requirements.

PI-FAM-FM likes things to be organized. So, it was challenging for her and her colleagues when people were not allowed to report to the office physically.

*"When I can't complete my work properly, I tend to become anxious.*

*So, when the pandemic strikes and some tasks are difficult to complete, I become extremely stressed out in addition to the current emotions because of the pandemic. I then come to the realization that the exclusive work-from-home setup is really not for us (finance), as our tasks require physical documents for verification and checking, as well as the printing of vouchers for the approvers' physical signatures on the cheques."*

The work-from-home arrangement has a different impact on staff, for PI-FAM-FM her unit belongs to the support services, it was challenging for them, given the nature of their jobs, which deals with finance management. Before the lockdowns were implemented, their unit, together with the IT department, worked hand-in-hand to automate finance processes to make them online and accessible whenever and wherever.

*“Although it was really stressful during those times, Sir \_\_\_\_\_ and his team were all out support to our unit. **The online finance system was ready for parallel testing and it’s good that it worked for us along with the remote access to our computers.** Approval of requests was done digitally/online. So, for a time, during the restrictions, **we managed to continue doing our tasks.**”*

But for her, nothing can replace the report to office arrangement. She also likes her personal life separated from her organizational life. She said that working in the office environment helped her more to work efficiently.

*“Also, **the working environment helps me to work efficiently.** As part of my daily routine, I go to work. Because of this, **my mind is focused on being in need or in a work mood when I’m there, as opposed to when I work from home, where I end up bonding with my family when I see them watching TV.**”*

Problems such as the one mentioned by PI-FAM-FM have been reported during the work-from-home arrangement in many organizations. In a study by Rioveros et al. (2021), work-from-home arrangements blurred the lines that separate work and home. This could also be related to the nature of work one has. It is true that some tasks are

difficult to perform in a work-from-arrangement, especially if it includes sensitive matters like finance. To address this challenge, PI-FAM-FM shared that their unit is the first team that is allowed to report to the office when the government mandates are less stringent.

*“Since we couldn’t completely deliver our tasks without going to the office, **we requested to be allowed to report to the office when the total lockdowns were lifted.** We proposed a type of schedule that worked for all of us in the unit. **Some of us worked on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the rest worked on Tuesdays and Thursdays.** It helped us adapt to the new setup while working remotely. **The organization is supportive as it also provided us door-to-door transportation and accommodation to ensure our safety. I believe it worked for all of us. I am less stressed, and I got to enjoy more time with my family.**”*

According to Lamas and Moumoutzis (2021), organizations have had to pivot their strategies and operations to adapt to the changing landscape. For example, businesses that relied heavily on in-person interactions had to find innovative ways to engage with customers and deliver their products or services remotely. In the case of PI-FAM-FM and her team, with the support provided by the organization, their concerns were heard, and the difficulties in balancing their personal and organizational life were addressed.

## **PI-FAM-HR**

The fifth phenomenological interviewee has been with the organization for 12 years. She is 38 years old. She handles human resource management tasks where she provides administrative and technical support in the implementation of various HR

services and programs such as recruitment and placement, attendance and timekeeping, payroll and benefits administration, and maintenance of the human resource information system. She also processes documentary requirements for separating staff, such as exit questionnaires, clearance processing, and other relevant documents.

PI-FAM-HR's deliverables are primarily transactional. This means she has to coordinate and communicate with internal and external people. Because of this, like PI-FAM-FM, she prefers face-to-face interaction with people. She shared that giving and getting feedback is faster. But during the height of the pandemic, all these have to change.

*“...during the remote work arrangement, **we used to communicate via email, messenger, and Viber. Our email exchanges increased, and we practice conducting meetings and trainings via online applications like Zoom and MS Teams.**”*

This has caused some concerns for her, as she is used to dealing with people face-to-face. Some of her concerns are about confusion and misunderstanding when utilizing digital technologies in dealing with people.

*“...**it can sometimes result in confusion and misunderstanding with people that affect our social relationships.** For example, **face-to-face communication with your co-workers and friends will allow you to adapt your voice tone or your thoughts can be delivered accordingly.** While through email, you will assess if your communication fits the right tone for your co-workers.”*

She believes that to address confusion and misunderstanding, one must assess which communication style is appropriate when communicating with an individual.

*“We can address this if we **properly assess which communication style is suited to the person receiving the message.**”*

She added that the pandemic triggered her to look for new ways of doing, and according to her, that new ways of doing is agile communication.

*“I think the changing environment triggered the need for new ways of doing like **“Agile Communication.”** During the pandemic, we do work from home and hybrid work set-up. **Because of this situation, to deliver our task we need to bring people, processes, connectivity, technology to find the most appropriate and effective way of doing to fulfill our duties and responsibilities as well as maintain relationships with people.**”*

Based on her narrative, PI-FAM-HR is already aware that her new ways of doing can be categorized as agile communication. For her, it is not just about being able to deliver her tasks; it is also about being able to maintain her social relationships.

## **PI-KMN-SM**

The sixth phenomenological interviewee is a senior officer for systems management. He is 49 years old and has been with the organization for 24 years. He supervises the systems management unit, where he provides strategic leadership, guidance, and monitoring of the organization's IT requirements. He and his teams are responsible for the overall technology infrastructure and computer system of the organization, including systems programming and automation developments, which reduces the manual work of the workforce.

With an extensive background in information technology, PI-KMN-SM is cognizant in terms of agile since it is a concept that started from computer programming and software development. With his 24 years with the organization, he has seen how it grew and developed, especially in terms of its information technology system. As the organization's leader in systems management, programming, and automation/software development, PI-KMN-SM guides the center in decision-making regarding the mentioned areas. He shared that during the lockdowns, he had not encountered substantial work-related problems since they had been working on systems programming and automation for years prior to the pandemic. In fact, most of those projects were already running or were undergoing parallel testing when the organization shifted to the work-from-home arrangement.

***“Nagkataon timing yung naglock down running na most of the automation na inimplement ng team. Yung sa finance sakto rin parallel testing na. Most ng inayos namin that time is paano magpo-provide ng support in terms of IT requirements for WFH. Tulad ng videoconferencing platforms, like MS Teams and Zoom. Nuong 2019, naintroduce na sa mga staff ang Zoom, nagagamit sya for meetings kapag may kameeting na offshore. Mas nagamit sya nung naglockdown syempre, kaya nagdagdag kami ng subscriptions. Tapos mas naenhance yung service ng MS Teams kaya nagpa HReX kami before about it para may option ang staff alin ang mas convenient sa kanila at sa ka-meeting nila na gamitin.”***

When asked about personal challenges during the WFH arrangement, he shared that aside from the limitations of moving and going outside, he has not experienced any difficulty. His children are already in the young adult stage and basically have their own activities. He said that his children are also inclined toward computers and technology,

and these have been their bonding during the lockdown, where they learn from each other. The learnings allowed him to focus on work and provide support to his team and the organization as a whole.

***“Ayy wala, Ma’am. Malalaki na ang mga bata, may kanya kanya nang pinagkakaabalahan. Siguro isa na rin yun na wala na ako masyadong inaalala sa bahay kasi malalaki na sila. Ang bonding namin ay computer and technology din. Children nowadays magagaling sa computer kaya natututo kami sa isa’t-isa. Since bawal lumabas nuon, mas marami time na nakakapagbonding kami. Sa organization naman, output based tayo. Hindi nakabase sa number of hours na trinabaho mo ang productivity ng isang employee. Sabi nga di ba, work smart na tayo. **Kaya kapag smart ka sa paggawa mo ng trabaho madali ka matatapos at may time ka pa sa pamilya.**”***

Building from his statement, PI-KMN-SM saw the pandemic as an opportunity to have more time with his family. Having an organization that encourages people to work smart by using available resources allows them to have more personal time with family and friends.

## **PI-KMN-EM**

The seventh phenomenological interviewee is 45 years old and a senior officer for the educational media unit. He’s been with the organization for eight (8) years. He supervises the educational media unit, providing technical leadership in designing and conceptualizing all media and web productions of the organization, online and in-person events, and knowledge fora. He leads the development of media project proposals, from pre-production to production and post-production. This includes the

preparation of concept notes, including the script and storyboards, and shooting and editing educational media.

When asked about personal challenges on the changes brought about by the pandemic, PI-KMN-EM started his answer by pointing out that he is a Gen X.

***“Bilang isang Gen X, so medyo andun kami sa pattern ng Traditional na forms of communication but with the emergence of technologies, nasa gitna kami. Digital migrants, yan kami. Nung pinanganak kami papausbong, emerging palang sya (technology). Unlike digital natives, mga kabataan ngayon techie. So, parang andun ako sa traditional level at the same time na-a-adopt namin yung technology. Yung emergence ng technology ngayon.”***

He shared that it affected him positively. He’s able to learn new things, and despite being a digital migrant, he is able to deliver work faster because of his digital know-how.

***“Hindi ako yung tipong nahirapan kasi I’m a digital migrant. Hindi rin yung tipong napwersa to adapt to the point na “Ayoko na, I’m too old for this” I’m just choosing what technology or means I will use. Diba andami dami ngayon. Sobrang dami. So, I study and learn technologies na comfortable ako And mas napapabilis ang trabaho, despite naka WFH nakakadeliver and that means nababalance ang time for work related activities and personal.”***

For him, agile communication practices are related to utilizing digital technologies because they assist in making or doing things easier. An example he cited is copy editing.

***“Agile communication, diba direct and mabilis. Yun yung purpose nun. So, with the use or with the technology mas napapadali ang proseso. Direct and fast din. For example in copy editing, before, we have to outsource copy editor, now with available software like Grammarly, iloload mo lang yung material, and it will do its job and deliver faster. Compared pag traditional, halimbawa ako ang mag copy edit, babasahin ko, iisa-isahin ko yun. But not to the point rin naman na iaasa na lang sa technology, andun pa rin ang human intervention. We have to act din as humans. With agile communication, using technology mas napapadali ang buhay natin.”***

Indirectly, PI-KMN-EM expressed some concerns about being a digital migrant belonging to Generation X. Although no hardships were explicitly mentioned, he shared that his generation is somewhere in the middle, where they are traditional but are still capable of learning to use digital technology. In using technology, human intervention is still essential. For him, digital technology is part of agile communication practices that make life and work easier.

### **PI-KMN-IM**

The eight phenomenological interviewee is 39 years old and has been with the organization for 16 years. He supervises the organization’s information management unit. As the senior officer, he provides leadership and expertise in the management of information, including planning and overseeing all activities related to knowledge management. This includes knowledge product packaging and dissemination, maintenance, and archiving. He is also involved in knowledge capture and sharing of all knowledge products and solutions of the organization.

As the Center's information management senior officer, he is very much involved in planning and implementing the organization's strategic direction. He shared that currently, there are no established agile communication practices within the organization, but he described it as being flat, open, and consultative, just like how they practice it within their unit.

***“I must say that there is actually no clearly established or standardized process for agile communication practices within the organization but in terms of our current communication practices within the our unit, I can say that we operate on a flat, open, consultative communication lines. We do not have stringent layers whenever we want to get to communicate with a colleague or a superior. We used various platforms to communicate (such as Facebook Messenger, Viber, Telegram, Email, Watercooler Wednesdays, etc.). Whenever there was an important task to do—the team pulled everyone’s strength to contribute and ensure the timely and quality completion of the work.”***

Building from his answer, it can be sensed that agile communication practices in the organization are bottom-up. It is being practiced at the unit level where, according to PI-KMN-IM, they utilize various communication platforms such as messaging applications and informal office gatherings like the Watercooler Wednesdays. This is his team's way of collaborating and drawing strength from one another.

During the pandemic, his team employed necessary adjustments due to the limited interaction. He shared that some of the notable experiences were increased reliance on digital tools, clear documentation of their correspondences, enhanced focus on each other's wellbeing, increased use of emojis to express emotions in message

exchanges, and being more sensitive about each other's time zones, and diverse working styles.

***“With limited interaction during the pandemic and WFH, the team made all the necessary adjustments to ensure effective collaboration despite physical distance. Some notable changes experienced were increased reliance on digital tools like video conferencing platforms and instant messaging apps; emphasis on clear documentation or capturing accurately and timely discussions, decisions, and project updates to ensure that correct messages and instructions are being sent across; enhanced focus on well-being as seen with the regular check-ins aimed to know how each member is faring and just sending virtual support in the challenging times; increased use of emojis to further express emotions and to compensate for the loss of face-to-face interactions; and blurred geographical locations and distances and we have been more keen on time zones and diverse working styles. These changes in team communication during remote work reflect a broader shift towards more flexible, technology-driven, and inclusive communication practices that will likely continue to influence the way teams collaborate in the future.”***

Despite the eagerness to effectively deliver their unit's tasks, PI-KMN-IM and his team are aware of each other's well-being. With their shared experiences, they are able to ensure that each team member is doing well and is also sensitive to one another's situations and conditions. In fact, they use emojis to express emotions to compensate for the loss of physical interaction where the absence of facial expressions and non-verbal communication are experienced. According to him, these changes in how they communicate as a team will likely continue to influence their team collaboration.

Although not explicitly uttered, PI-KMN-IM team communication can be categorized as agile communication as it is flexible, technology-driven, inclusive, and consistent with the concept of agile communication. It has become their coping mechanism to adjust and thrive in the changing environment, allowing them to function effectively while maintaining their relationships and not sacrificing their well-being. He also added that new ways of working and doing require agile approaches.

***“Transitioning to the current work environment indeed requires agile approaches, including communication. We should recognize that the world has evolved, and we can no longer go back to the usual things we do. Our stakeholders have changed, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has disrupted the things that we do—we must take a step back and reassess what we are doing, what programs we are implementing and answer the question if these are all future-proof?”***

For him, the recognition of how the world has evolved, the changing needs of the stakeholders, and artificial intelligence (AI) is a game changer. Reassessing current practices is essential to answer whether these are still relevant and future-proof. According to PI-KMN-IM, in order to do just that, agile approaches, including communication, are imperative.

## **PI-KMN-KR**

The ninth phenomenological interviewee handles the knowledge resource center of the organization. He is 30 years old and has been with the organization for seven (7) years. He is a senior associate providing technical support and inputs in the knowledge resources development activities, including library and archival services.

This includes the acquisition, organization, and maintenance of the library's collection and related initiatives. He also handles tasks involving interlibrary cooperation and agreements.

During the work-from-home set-up, PI-KMN-KR expressed some concerns about routine challenges and communication. He also shared that communication is different for different people.

***“I encountered some challenges in terms of routinary deliverables. I am in charge of the organization’s library, and some routines had to change, like inquiring and acquiring needed references for certain projects. In every organization meron naman challenges talaga. Communication is different for different people. Some people are perpetually online, while some are only active for a specific time. Thankfully, our technologies are capable of instant messaging. Its asynchronicity allows the feedback and response loop to be very convenient but depending on the person, although the revert can be a little slow.”***

He shared that while technology allows people to communicate despite challenges in proximity, he said that it's just one of the problems it solves.

***“Agile communication... it is more than being dependent on technology; it's not just about the convenience in communicating but also how you can communicate, paano mo gawin yung communication. It's two ways. You should have a lot of feedback that's easy and fast. That's the concept of agile. Technology makes things very efficient. For example, if you need feedback from your customers, they can also send it to you electronically. But that is just a tool that agile communication uses to make the concept work.***

*So that **limitations can be addressed when it comes to distance. It's just one of the problems it solves, you know, with technology. But agile communication is not entirely dependent on technology; if it is, then that's virtual communication.** Agile communication is something one can practice even if hindi sya virtual."*

He emphasized that using technology alone in communicating is not agile communication, although it is a tool being used in practicing agile communication. For him, agile communication is something one can practice despite the absence of technology. He said that technology complements agile communication; in his case, he uses technology to conduct research through the internet and send it via email. He sends the materials in chunks to ensure that information is delivered efficiently, gets feedback immediately, as well as saves time instead of doing and completing the task all at once.

*"So, sakin personally with research portion, I do research on the internet. For example, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ papahanap sya information about social emotional learning. I do it piece by piece like send them to her information piece by piece. I then send the research items to her through email. Then she gives feedback to me so I can adjust the amount of research. **That's more convenient for me and her. Mas mabilis mag review ng information if they're by chunks. I don't have to create this full report at once and send everything to the person. I don't have to finish everything at once and then ganun ko sya icocommunicate (by chunks).** There's no need to finish it all and then submit it. Mas mahaba and tiring yung ganun na process. **In the process (of sending it in chunks), I can readjust what needs to be adjusted** as needed based on the feedback. And that **makes us progress***

*better with back-and-forth feedback. Saves us a lot of time and in the process nagkakaran ka ng time na rin for yourself. That is agile communication there, the use of technology for ease, but as a human, ikaw pa rin ang may control. And you don't let work control your life na rin, mas may time management sa ganun na process."*

Consistent with PI-KMN-EM's narratives, PI-KMN-KR also believes that digital technologies are part of agile communication practices requiring human intervention and interaction. While digital technology eases communication, especially in addressing limitations in distance, one cannot just depend on technology alone and expect everything to automatically fall into place. For him, practicing agile communication also allows him to manage his time and not let work control his life.

#### **PI-LDM-LM**

The tenth phenomenological interviewee is a course development specialist and has been with the organization for six (6) years. Her tasks include designing, managing, and evaluating the design and implementation of big, high-level, complex, and multi-component learning and development projects. She develops and carries out learning needs assessments both at the learner and organizational levels. She also designs regional learning programs that address the needs of education leaders and managers. She works closely with content providers and subject matter experts, tutors, and funding agency representatives.

She shared that she experienced some challenges related to the huge tasks at hand during the shift to a work-from-home arrangement. She said the decreased face-to-

face interaction with colleagues resulted in fewer opportunities to ask questions directly and quickly and collaborate with her colleagues. She even doubted her own abilities in the process.

*“The WFH arrangement needed some getting used to, especially at the beginning. **One personal challenge I experienced was increased anxiety.** At the time, we did not know how long the pandemic would last. The government declared different types/levels of quarantine every two (2) weeks or so, so there was a lot of uncertainty: *hanggang kelan kaya ang ECQ/MECQ, etc? Babalik na ba kami sa office? I also felt anxious about my own work/tasks. There was less face-to-face interaction with colleagues and supervisors and, therefore, fewer opportunities to directly and quickly ask questions, get advice, or throw ideas around. I tended to doubt my ideas and project management strategies (there was the thought of “hala baka mali ang ginagawa ko” because I couldn’t compare with what others were doing).*”*

At the beginning of the work-from-home arrangement, PI-LDM-LM experienced isolation, resulting in self-doubt. She shared that what helped her cope was the firmness of the organization on the implementation of alternative work arrangements. Despite the changing government quarantine declarations, the organization's work-from-home arrangement remained until mid-2022. It avoided creating confusion among the staff as clear correspondence about the work arrangements was properly communicated via email advisories. When it was finally safe to report to the office, the organization implemented a transition period where gradual work resumption was practiced to give the staff some time to adjust.

***“One thing that helped was the organization’s firmness on the WFH arrangement. Even when most of the quarantine levels were lifted, the WFH arrangement remained. When we finally returned to the office, there was a transition period (hybrid arrangement) so people could slowly adjust.”***

Aside from the support provided by the organization’s management, having a supportive core group of colleagues helped PI-LDM-LM to cope with the WFH arrangement. Since she and her colleagues belong to the same age group, they can relate to each other’s experiences; in return, they feel validated, and the feeling of isolation is lessened.

***“One thing that helped was to have a core group of colleagues who were about the same age as me and had similar experiences. We would check in on each other from time to time (personal kumustahan, and not necessarily just about work), and I would feel validated because I was not the only one feeling the stress/anxiety. It became a practice to have weekly check-in meetings every Monday. This was not something we did pre-pandemic, mostly because updates and communication happen constantly when we are face-to-face. But during the pandemic, we really had to set a time to check in with each other. “***

She also shared that it has become a conscious effort for their team to have weekly check-in meetings to share updates. In agile communication, certain practices have to adjust. According to the literature, the ability to respond and take advantage of the changing environment shows organizational agility (Zerfaß, 2018). Being agile includes identifying relevant changes and responding proactively and efficiently.

## PI-LDM-LI

The eleventh phenomenological interviewee is a senior associate for course implementation. He's been with the organization for three (3) years. He designs and manages course implementation of single-component development programs. He also participates in designing and planning training programs and capacity-building interventions. He is tasked to prepare and consolidate periodic and terminal evaluation reports of training programs, including program effectiveness for continual improvement.

He shared that during the work-from-home arrangement, practices undergo adjustments to accommodate unique challenges and opportunities presented by virtual collaboration.

*“As a course manager, my agile communication practices at work are centered on adaptability, transparency, and maintaining a strong connection with both instructors and students. In a traditional setting, these practices involve regular in-person meetings, open-door policies, and clear communication channels. However, **in the context of a remote work arrangement, these practices undergo adjustments to accommodate the unique challenges and opportunities presented by virtual collaboration.**”*

For him, these changes and the new ways of doing are triggered by the rapid and unexpected shift to remote work during the pandemic. He added that the pandemic served as a catalyst that prompted the reevaluation and reimagining of communicating at work.

***“The need for new ways of working, particularly “Agile Communication,” in my context as a course manager was primarily triggered by the rapid and unexpected shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic acted as a catalyst, prompting a reevaluation of traditional communication methods and necessitating a more adaptive and flexible approach to maintain effective collaboration and productivity. The sudden nature of the transition meant that established communication routines had to be reimaged.”***

He mentioned some concerns about the effects of this sudden transition at work. Aside from the need to coordinate with colleagues remotely, he also shared that there is a chance of feeling of isolation among team members. He said that ensuring communication remains transparent and efficient is the antidote to this. For him, that means veering away from the usual communication practices and adopting agile communication.

***“The sudden transition to remote work posed several challenges, including the need to coordinate tasks without physical proximity, address potential feelings of isolation among team members, and ensure that communication remained transparent and efficient. This shift required a departure from conventional communication norms and the adoption of agile communication practices to respond promptly to changing circumstances.”***

For PI-LDM-LI, agile communication is an important aspect in order to cope with changes such as remote work arrangements. He shared that agile communication practices ensure that communication among team members remains transparent and efficient, avoiding the staff's potential feelings of isolation. He furthered that:

*“Open communication ensures that everyone are comfortable to share, discuss and even embrace what went wrong, learn from the said lapse(s) and move on. **Transparency espouses trust and confidence** within the team. **Collaboration entails putting together all minds and hands in solving a certain problem.** And finally, **empathy—it binds the team together.**”*

## **PI-LQM-LP**

The twelfth phenomenological interviewee is an associate for legal and quality management. She is with the organization for two (2) years. She provides administrative support and technical assistance to the manager and other units under the legal and quality management office. She handles office-related processes and concerns, including participation in planning, monitoring, and evaluating legal and quality activities and services.

During the pandemic, she is still in a different office. She shared how their communication changed from face-to-face to virtual interactions. She stated some challenges experienced due to the sudden change.

*“In 2020, before the pandemic hit, I was still with \_\_\_\_\_. Usually, **we have face-to-face meetings regarding our programs/ projects.** During the pandemic, face-to-face meetings were **replaced with virtual ones through video conferencing.** This proved to be **challenging, though, due to several reasons:** 1) it needs to be **scheduled ahead of time to ensure everyone’s availability,** unlike in the office where you can instantly set a meeting because everyone’s present almost all the time, 2) it **heavily relies on internet connectivity,** once your internet connection is unstable you won’t be able to*

*hear and see your workmates properly and worst you won't be able to join the meeting, and 3) **not everyone's house is work conducive**, there might be a lot of distractions during the meeting especially noise from housemates and or neighbors.*

PI-LQM-LP raised some concerns about how online meetings were scheduled ahead of time compared to spontaneous meetings held in the office. Another is the reliance on internet connectivity, which affects the quality of communication with colleagues when the connection is intermittent and that not all homes are conducive to work. Literature showed that slow internet connection is one of the identified hurdles in the Philippines (Ochave, 2020); it hampers virtual communication, especially in companies that heavily relied on connectivity during the height of the pandemic. Aside from that, reports showed that work-from-home arrangements also blurred the lines that separate work and home (Rioveros et al., 2021).

PI-LQM-LP believes it takes more than virtual communication to cope with the effects of the pandemic. She saw the need to regularly check with her colleagues in order to be aware of each other's psychological and emotional well-being. She also experienced overthinking because of the lack of human emotions embedded in the messages sent via digital platforms.

***“Regular one-on-one check-ins were also very important to check the psychological and emotional well-being of the team. Sometimes, I overthink it too when my colleague who used to message me with “emojis” in messaging apps suddenly did not use one in his/her message. I feel like the person is upset with me, but eventually, through asking questions or just checking in on them, I realized that they're just trying to***

*conserve their energy and/or they're having a bad day, and it is not related to something I did. I am usually very honest and is not shy to ask for help from my teammates, even with my supervisor. **I think these interactions and informal discussions, even those that are not work-related, are also an important part of our everyday life at work** because we get to know each other more and **build stronger relationships.**"*

Same with PI-LDM-LM, PI-LQM-LP also experienced isolation, leading to self-doubt. Since communicating via digital technologies eliminates the emotional aspect of the message, it creates uncertainty and negative emotions for PI-LQM-LP. She saw the importance of open communication through asking questions and giving feedback. Informal discussions were also a premium in maintaining relationships, according to her. This is related to the communication rationality described by Habermas (1981). He explained the basic premise of communicative rationality as that 'rationality' or reason is tied to social interaction and dialogue. The exercise of reason occurs only through dialogues leading to mutual deliberation, which results in collective deliberation and agreement.

Summarizing the participants' accounts, it can be sensed that not all staff are certain if their practices can be identified as agile communication. However, some are already calling their new ways of doing agile communication. This could be related to the fact that currently, there are no established agile communication practices within the organization. Some things are common based on their narratives, such that their new ways of doing helped them to navigate the complexities of the sudden environmental changes, allowed them to maintain their relationships with their colleagues and

families, and, more importantly, their new practices are more than virtual communication as they put premium in maintaining human interventions and interactions beyond the utilization of digital technologies.

The role of communication in agile organizations, especially during the pandemic, has been examined. It covers beyond the utilization of virtual communication (communication that is delivered via computer, smartphone, or other automated device (Khan, 2021)) and digital technologies (emails, websites, social media, videoconferencing (Epitech, 2023)) considering the rapidly changing environment. This is why best communication practices can help the organization communicate more effectively and responsibly during a pandemic and during “normal times.” The role of agile communication in balancing the staff’s lifeworld and systems has also been established.

In order to contextualize agile communication more in this international educational organization, the following sections present in this chapter the subjective perspectives, adaptations, challenges, and successes encountered by staff members to describe, understand, and elicit the essence of agile communication in their context. Findings were derived guided by the following research questions:

1. What meaning of agile communication is described by staff members based on their experiences?
2. How are these descriptions of agile communication practiced and shared by the staff members?
3. What is the essence of agile communication in an agile international educational organization?

These questions were answered using the Steps in Phenomenological Data Analysis as discussed in the previous chapter.

### **Search for Meaning**

This section is based on what the phenomenological interviewees have experienced. Using the phenomenological approach horizontalizing, all forms of a priori or any forms of suspicion are removed to identify the invariant constituents of the participants' experiences. This is because not all results of transcription can be used and are relevant to the phenomenon under study.

### **Descriptions of Agile Communication**

As described by the staff members, agile communication floated various ideas and codes given the participants' diverse professions and backgrounds. These varying perspectives were utilized by the researcher, who underwent data analysis following Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological data and analysis procedure to identify textural descriptions of the phenomenon. By undertaking this, the researcher has remained faithful to the participants' 'textural language' descriptions and accepted that this is how they describe the phenomenon (or agile communication) (Bevan, 2014). This maintains an essential level of validity (ibid).

To answer the first research question, a total of fifteen (15) theme clusters of textural descriptions (descriptions of agile communication) of agile communication were obtained from the twelve (12) phenomenological interviewees after conducting the steps in phenomenological data analysis. These are elucidated below:

**Table 2. Descriptions of Agile Communication**

What meaning of agile communication is described by staff members based on their practices?

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**Theme Clusters: Textural Descriptions**

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1. *Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to the changing circumstances*
  2. *Ability to adapt communication to changing environment*
  3. *User-centric to delivering value to stakeholders*
  4. *Knowing the stakeholders' needs*
  5. *Iteration and Collaboration*
  6. *Innovative and evolving process*
  7. *Efficient work environment*
  8. *Simple, direct, and face-to-face communication*
  9. *Transparency in communicating*
  10. *Feedback loops*
  11. *More than a management principle*
  12. *Embedded in project management practice*
  13. *Ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes*
  14. *Responding to change without compromising the quality of work*
  15. *Timely delivery of project*
- 

*\*Please see Appendix D for Data Coding: Textural Descriptions*

***Flexibility to Adapt and Respond Quickly/ Rapidly to the Changing Circumstances***

The concept of agility within the organization has been present long before the onset of the pandemic. There have been talks about it, especially in the area of project management, given that the organization's work paradigm is projectized. This guided the staff in dealing with changes and crises. With their knowledge of agile project management, they are also able to utilize it in communicating their adaptation strategies. One way they describe agile communication is being *flexible to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to changing circumstances*:

***“Agile communication is being flexible and able to respond quickly or adapt to evolving circumstances at work. It involves creating communication strategies or approaches that are innovative and responsive, with the least negative impacts as much as possible.***

... our project teams should be able to **quickly adjust to and address these changing circumstances.**" [PI-ERI-ER]

"Agile communication in the context of organizations typically refers to **the ability of an organization to adapt and be flexible to respond to changing circumstances, customer needs, and market conditions quickly and effectively.**" [PI-KMN-SM]

"Agile communication in an organizational context refers to the ability of an organization or in the case of [an innovation and technology international educational organization], **to quickly and efficiently adapt to changes in the internal and external environment.**" [PI-KMN-IM]

"...my agile communication practices at work are centered on **flexibility, adaptability, transparency, and maintaining a strong connection with both instructors and students.**" [PI-LDM-LI]

### **Ability to Adapt Communication to the Changing Environment**

Aside from being flexible and quick to respond, staff members also describe their communication practices as the *ability to adapt their communication to the changing environment* in managing changes:

"Agile communication **means being adaptable to a shifting work environment and increasing your ability to manage changes.**"

[PI-FAM-FM]

*“For me, agile communication means being able to adapt your communication to changing circumstances while keeping the project/task on track.” [PI-FAM-HR]*

Based on the gathered data, staff view agile communication as a means of adaptation to respond to the needs of the organization and its environment. Part of being flexible and adaptive is being able to create communication strategies that are responsive and can readily adjust to various conditions.

Staff members understand that flexible and adaptive communication is vital in managing changes. They believe that communication strategies are not cast in stone; thus, they have to be flexible and adaptive to thrive in the volatility of the environment with the least negative impact as much as possible. With a background in agile project management, staff understand that their communication, too, must change and be agile for seamless implementations of their projects and deliverables.

The staff members' focus on efficiently adapting to changes in the internal and external environment reflects the factors mentioned in organizational agility, such as flexible processes and the alignment of structures, culture, and communication tools (Zerfaß, 2018). Moreover, these descriptions show how positive and negative experiences influence how communication strategies are developed and applied.

### ***User-centric to Delivering Value to Stakeholders***

Staff members also describe agile communication as *user-centric in delivering value to stakeholders*. In order to deliver the message or, in the case of the organization, their

knowledge products and solutions, in the quickest time possible, communication must be user-centered:

*“Personally, I see agile communication as a user-centered approach to delivering value to stakeholders at the quickest time possible.” [PI-ERI-EI]*

*“...the capacity to respond rapidly to evolving stakeholder needs, market changes, and demands, advancements in technologies and related infrastructures, including unforeseen challenges. In packaging the knowledge product, target audiences are top of mind.” [PI-KMN-IM]*

The descriptions stating that agile communication is user-centric emphasize the role of individuals in learning new knowledge and utilizing it for successful actions. Moreover, the user-centered approach confirms the idea of creating a framework based on people’s reality to guide actions (Norreklit, 2014).

The quick response to changing needs and the use of communication as a tool to deliver value to stakeholders shows that agility is present in the organization, particularly its ability to respond to changes efficiently and implement flexible processes in a short time. In organizational communication concepts, communication is not just about transmitting information but also molding an individual’s and organization’s identity and functioning.

### ***Knowing the Stakeholders’ Needs***

Aside from the market conditions and the overall internal and external changes in the environment, they also consider their customers’ needs. Since they consider the

receiver of the information as an important element in successful communication, they deem it essential to get to know them. They describe this as *knowing the stakeholders' needs*:

*“In our context, we do recognize that the implementation of R&D projects – both the design and timeline – is often fluid. **Agile communication** requires innovation, which evolves as we go through the implementation process, while **the timeline is almost always dependent on the needs of the key stakeholders.**” [PI-ERI-ER]*

*“I do believe that communication approaches vary per individual or group of individuals. I practice it every day. One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library. I conducted a multi-level consultation and needs analysis (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts). I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned. The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted.” [PI-KMN-IM]*

*“...the receiver of the information is very important. Well the message intent, too, but hindi pwede na kung ano gusto mo sabihin, you just say it. (You can't just say what you want to say). Because in that case, hindi sya tatagos. (Because in this case, the message won't get through). It's not you say eh, it's how you say it. **So, we should know who we are communicating with and what are their needs.**” [PI-ERI-ER]*

Given the incommensurable characteristics of their stakeholders, staff believe that it is essential to know them, especially their needs. This guides them in performing their tasks to deliver their commitments. They put value on the needs and demands of their stakeholders, which informs their strategies on how to best communicate with them.

Understanding the stakeholders' needs is akin to recognizing their individual perspectives. Knowing stakeholders' needs is crucial for organizational agility, as it allows for a proactive and efficient response to changes in the internal and external environment.

### ***Iteration and Collaboration***

Other descriptions of agile communication involved collaboration, innovation, and iteration, fostering an efficient working environment. *Iteration and collaboration* go hand in hand. It involves veering away from rigid practices; it has to be collaborative, which means various decision-making and planning factors from different individuals are considered; thus, it undergoes continuous adjustments and iteration:

*“As a program manager, embracing the concept of agile communication within the organization is **fundamental to navigating the dynamic landscape of project management. Agile communication, in this context, entails fostering adaptability, flexibility, and a collaborative communication approach to work. It involves a departure from rigid, upfront planning towards iterative planning and continuous adjustments based on ongoing feedback and changing project needs.**” [PI-LDM-LI]*

*“...agile communication is not an all-or-nothing kind of approach. The context in which one finds themselves in would ultimately dictate what*

*principles can be made actionable to improve one's work. **In my case, it is the iterative process that we can incorporate in our work.** In fact, it is built into our project management system.” [PI-ERI-EI]*

These descriptions resonate that procedures and processes do not dominate the staff's functioning. Instead, procedures and processes are the ones being adjusted according to how they will best serve their purpose. The descriptions of the collaborative approach and iterative planning show the importance of language and human interactions in successful actions. Collaboration, as well as continuous adjustments in the organizational context, shows that communication is constitutive of an organization's identity and functioning of Organizational Communication. Finally, the description of agile communication challenging traditional approaches and advocating for adaptable and flexible communication strategies align with the transformative power of interpretivism highlighted in organizational communication.

### ***Innovative and Evolving Process***

In terms of communication in project management, data shows that innovation is an important factor in agile communication. Staff described that communication here is an *innovative and evolving process*:

*“**Agile communication requires innovation designs, which evolve as we go through the implementation process,** while the timeline almost always depends on the key stakeholders.” [PI-ERI-ER]*

*“In our context, we do recognize that the implementation of R&D projects – both the design and timeline – is often fluid. **Agile communication requires innovation, which evolves** as we go through the implementation*

process, while **the timeline almost always depends on the needs of the key stakeholders.**" [PI-ERI-EI]

Innovation is an essential factor in agile communication, which, as noted by Kaak (2017), entails reassessing communication approaches to match new tech innovations and empower the individuals in the organization.

### ***Efficient Work Environment***

In collaborative and innovative communication, continuous iterations occur, especially when working in a team. Innovation includes a hit-or-miss approach; thus, it paves the way to an evolving process of trying new things and identifying what works best. This can be challenging for staff working in teams, so collaboration, which fosters consultative and participative principles that must be exercised by the team members. Participants shared that when all these are present, it results in an *efficient work environment*:

***"Agile communication practices in a work environment are essential for promoting collaboration, transparency, allowing for efficiency at work. These practices are particularly crucial in project management and team collaboration."*** [PI-KMN-SM]

***"...these [agile communication] practices are essential in fostering a collaborative and efficient work environment. Such promote effective communication, transparency, and adaptability within teams, facilitating the timely exchange of information and the quick resolution of issues."*** [PI-KMN-IM]

The descriptions highlight the importance of fostering an efficient working environment through collaborative and innovative communication, emphasizing experimenting with new approaches and identifying effective strategies. Moreover, the continuous iterative approach to innovation encourages learning for an efficient working environment.

### ***Simple, Direct, and Face-to-Face Communication***

Interpersonal communication is one of the requirements when working in teams. It has to be direct and transparent, allowing for team members to be agile. Participants describe it as *simple, direct, and face-to-face communication*:

*“In terms of project management, **agile communication means simple, direct, and face-to-face communications or conversations and passing on instructions.**” [PI-KMN-EM]*

*“...but agile communication is more **practiced if there is a face-to-face interaction.**” [PI-FAM-FM]*

*“... [agile] communication is **more instantaneous and seems to be more intimate (relatable) during face-to-face work arrangements.** During face-to-face work arrangements, **we can easily go to each other’s workstations and get immediate feedback.**” [PI-ERI-ER]*

During the interview, staff members shared that communication becomes less bureaucratic when it is simple, direct, and done face-to-face. Staff members prefer face-to-face communication because, for them, face-to-face interactions are more instantaneous, where feedback is readily available and more relatable. Communication becomes more intimate with non-verbal cues, gestures, and even facial expressions.

Staff members stress the importance of simple, direct, face-to-face communication, where individuals form unique ideas shaping interpretation and efficient communication with an emphasis on immediacy and non-verbal cues. This sees language as a crucial tool for successful actions. Staff's preference for face-to-face communication builds an organizational culture, molding identity and functioning.

### ***Transparency in Communicating***

As non-verbal cues contribute to simple, direct, and face-to-face communication, this also leads to *transparency in communicating* with one another. Communication here is open and discerned beyond words or what is being said. Whether positive or negative, information is shared and sensed as a team. Relevant information is accessible to everyone involved in a project team. Staff also shared that this could be related to the staff's established work relationships and enabling environment, allowing them to communicate freely and casually:

*“Our organization is relatively small—everyone knows everyone, and there is a certain level of comfort and familiarity. The relationships and dynamics **enable us to communicate with each other freely and casually, even in a work context.** These informal communications are later documented more formally (like email or memo).” [PI-LDM-LM]*

*“In our organization, **agile communication** practices are essential in fostering a collaborative and efficient work environment. **Such promote effective communication, transparency, and adaptability within teams, facilitating the timely exchange of information and the quick resolution of issues.**” [PI-KMN-IM]*

The descriptions emphasize the importance of transparent communication within the organization, resonating with the literature and highlighting its crucial role in effective collaboration. The mention of non-verbal cues contributing to direct face-to-face communication emphasizes that communicating beyond words constitutes the organization through interactions and narratives.

### **Feedback Loops**

By being transparent in communicating, *feedback loops* become consistent. Consistent feedback, may it be negative or positive, breeds development and improvement on their projects and deliverables:

*“... a collaborative communication approach to work. It involves a departure from rigid, upfront planning towards iterative planning and continuous adjustments **based on ongoing feedback and changing project needs.**”* [PI-LDM-LI]

*“Agile communication focuses on rapid cycles of product development and improvement through regular **end-user feedback.**”* [PI-KMN-KR]

*“**Regular feedback is crucial in agile communication, but inconsistent or delayed feedback loops can hinder the ability to adapt quickly and make informed decisions.**”* [PI-KMN-IM]

Agile communication, as described by the staff, requires timely and consistent feedback to make quick and efficient resolutions. According to them, delayed or inconsistent feedback can hinder the individual's and organization's ability to adapt and make informed decisions.

The emphasis on consistent feedback stresses the importance of timely feedback for quick adaptation, where learning involves collective analysis, leading to more harmonious relationships among the staff members.

### ***More Than Just a Management Principle***

Another important definition of agile communication, as described by the staff members, is that it is *more than just a management principle*. It is more than just a policy that requires everyone to comply with. Agile communication within the organization appears to be innate and natural among the staff members and is not forced upon them. This could be related to the organizational enabling leadership and the fluidity of their processes and policies:

***“...It is more than a management principle, but rather a culture that is seen in people’s behaviors, in leadership style, and in the processes and policies of the organization. An agile culture, in terms of communicating, encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and autonomous. I feel like the Agile Communication practices in our organization remain bottom-up. Meaning, agile communication is more prevalent in the smaller project teams and in the units, rather than the entire organization.”*** [PI-LDM-LM]

***“Agile communication encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and autonomous.”*** [PI-ERI-ER]

Agile communication can be observed in the organization’s culture, seen in how people behave and how leaders lead, which can also be seen in the organization’s policies

and processes. Leadership in an organization that utilizes agile communication, such as this international educational organization, empowers people to be innovative as their concerns and opinions are heard and considered.

### ***Embedded in Project Management System***

While agile communication was described as a guide to swiftly respond to the shifting needs and requirements of their environment, staff said that this is because it is embedded in their *project management system*:

*“...agile communication is not an all-or-nothing kind of approach. The context in which one finds themselves in would ultimately dictate what principles can be made actionable to improve one’s work. In my case, it is the iterative communication process that we can incorporate in our work. **In fact, it is built into our project management system.**” [PI-ERI-EI]*

With their experience in agile project management, staff members also tend to apply agility principles in their communication. They know that in order to practice agility in the projects they handle, their communication must be agile, too.

Notably, embedding agile communication in project management systems echoes the literature's emphasis on communication in organizational agility. This supports the notion that communication is constitutive of organization and crucial for adapting to changing circumstances. Agile Communication is seen as more than just a management principle and a culture influencing behavior and leadership within an organizational context. The notion that agile culture fosters creativity, experimentation, and autonomy emphasizes that agile communication is instrumental in aligning differing

individual perceptions within an organization. This shows that effective communication shapes an individual's and organization's identity and functioning.

### ***Ability to Pivot Strategies, Structures and Processes***

Agile communication was also described as the *ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes*:

*“An organization practicing agile communication is **characterized by its flexibility, resilience, and ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes swiftly and effectively.**” [PI-LDM-LM]*

Staff members believe that agile communication allows them to push forward significant changes and have a focus on the organization's direction, including strategies and processes.

This emphasizes that organizations practicing agile communication possess the capability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes efficiently to respond to changing internal and external environments. The idea of flexibility and resilience in agile communication is related to organizational agility. It involves adapting and responding proactively to relevant changes. This confirms the role of communication in guiding the organization's ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes effectively, which in turn allows faster delivery of targets.

### ***Responding to Change without Compromising the Quality of Work***

With the descriptions already discussed above, staff also shared that agile communication allows them to *respond to change without compromising the quality*

of work. Despite the ever-changing working conditions, crises including sudden ones, communicating with agility allows them to deliver their commitments without compromising their quality and standards:

*“From the word term itself, “agile communication,” it is how organizations communicate to respond to changes, especially sudden ones, **without compromising the quality of work.**” [PI-LQM-LP]*

*“... **It involves creating communication strategies or approaches that are innovative and responsive, with the least negative impacts as much as possible.**” [PI-ERI-ER]*

These descriptions from the staff members support the notion that agile communication is about swiftly adapting communication strategies in response to changing circumstances. The focus is on maintaining effectiveness and quality even in dynamic and rapidly changing environments, not just by the organization but also by its members. This aligns with the broader theme of organizational agility and its application to communication practices.

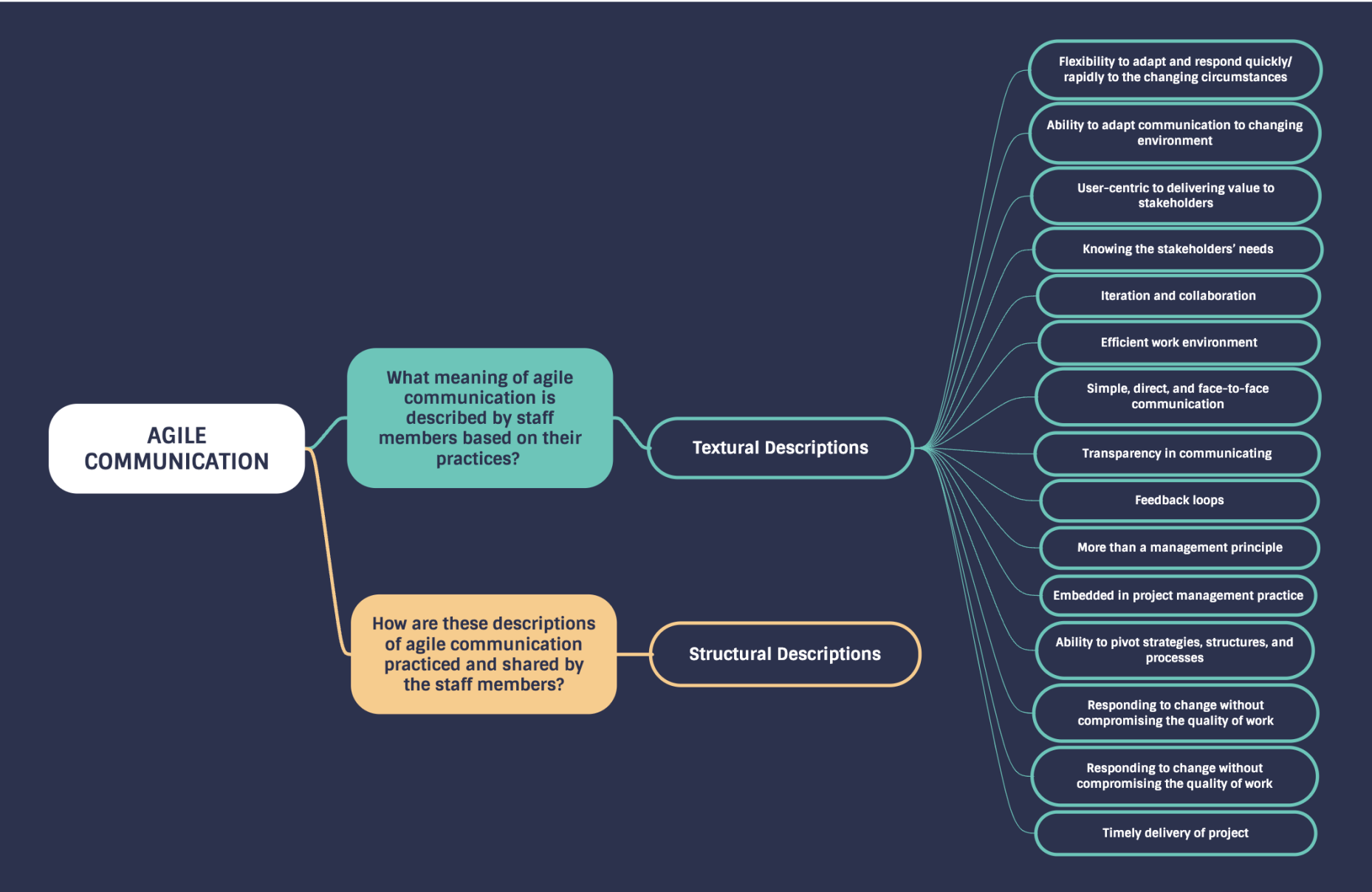
### ***Timely Delivery of Project***

To maintain the quality of work, staff also described agile communication as the *timely delivery of the project*. Although there are times when some projects need to catch up, this is due to the many things happening around them that they have to deal with. However, according to them, agile communication makes them aware of the project timelines, which guides them in avoiding delays and helps them keep the project on track:

*“For me, agile communication means being able to adapt your communication to changing circumstances while **keeping the project/task on track.**” [PI-FAM-HR]*

This shows that agile communication in the organizational context, particularly adapting communication to changing circumstances, ensures the project stays on track. This is consistent with the notion that flexibility and adaptability in communication strategies are essential for navigating dynamic and rapidly changing environments. Moreover, when a project stays on track, that also means that they do not have to extend deadlines or work overtime in order to deliver their commitments, preventing their work from superseding their personal/social life.

Figure 5. Textural Description



## **Agile Communication Practices**

With the descriptions of agile communication elucidated, it is also interesting to understand the agile communication practices of the staff. Thus, this section attempts to answer the second research question. Participants' knowledge, skills, and values are included as they practice agile communication. Below is the table of agile communication practices of the staff members clustered into structural descriptions themes:

**Table 3. Agile Communication Practices**

How are these descriptions of agile communication practiced and shared by the staff members?

<b>Theme Clusters: Textural Descriptions</b>	<b>Theme Clusters: Structural Descriptions</b>
1. Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to the changing circumstances	a. <i>Proactive communication</i> b. <i>Use of social media and messaging applications</i> c. <i>Use of video conferencing platforms</i>
2. Ability to adapt communication to the changing environment	a. <i>Succinct and vivid message construction</i> b. <i>Utilization of technology</i>
3. User-centric to delivering value to stakeholders	a. <i>Valuing the Stakeholder's Communication Preference</i>
4. Knowing the stakeholders' needs	a. <i>Communicating using the end-user language</i> b. <i>Conduct of needs assessment and consultation</i>
5. Iteration and Collaboration	a. <i>Co-designing of online systems and processes</i> b. <i>Use of collaboration tools facilitating seamless coordination</i>
6. Innovative and evolving process	a. <i>Practical implementation of processes and knowledge products towards improvement</i>
7. Efficient work environment	a. <i>Understanding unique perspectives and expertise</i>
8. Simple, direct, and face-to-face communication	a. <i>Veering away from the bureaucratic process</i> b. <i>Open and flat communication</i>
9. Transparency in communicating	a. <i>Disclosure of all relevant information</i>
10. Feedback loops	a. <i>Quick and Consistent Feedbacking</i>
11. More than a management principle	a. <i>Working under minimal supervision</i> b. <i>Thinking outside the box</i>
12. Embedded in project management practice	a. <i>Operate projects within the framework</i>
13. Ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes	b. <i>Adjusting the processes to avoid working in silos</i>
14. Responding to change without compromising the quality of work	a. <i>Staying focused and objective</i>
15. Timely delivery of project	a. <i>Finding ways to deliver commitments</i>

\*Please see Appendix E for Data Coding: Structural Descriptions

Agile communication experiences shared by the staff were a mix of pre-pandemic, pandemic, and current times practices. Some practices they shared are those they had started doing pre-pandemic, which helped them navigate the complexities brought about by the changing environmental context while others were developed overtime.

As a center for educational research, innovation, and technology, the organization has been aware of the possible effects and risks of health crises. In fact, they have developed a course for school heads that tackles innovative health management of students and teachers in schools. This was developed way back in 2014, almost six (6) years prior to the pandemic, in anticipation of possible health crises in schools and how to support the school heads in managing the overall health of the school community.

The organization led many other initiatives, such as the one mentioned. The initiatives, the findings, and the results of their research efforts were their north star in navigating these unprecedented times.

Related to **Clustered Textural Description 1**, *flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/rapidly to the changing circumstances*, three (3) clustered structural descriptions were derived from their practices:

a. Proactive communication

*“During the pandemic, we are on work-from-home set-up. **One of the agile communication practices we did in our unit was texting or messaging our colleague before making a call. Parang advance notice that, hey, I will be calling you at this time. So, the other person will be able to adjust his/her schedule.**” [PI-ERI-EU]*

*“When a new team member or technical support staff is onboarded, I adapt my communication style to ease them into the team or the project. **I try to be proactive through verbal and written communication.** Because they are new and don’t have much background about the Center or our projects, I*

***try to be careful and avoid info-dumping or info-overloading the new team members. I communicate action points with the proper information that they need, for example what task to do, who to talk to, where to get forms/files, etc. Verbal communication allows them to ask questions or clarify points while written communication provides a note that they can refer to later.”***

[PI-LDM-LM]

Staff members anticipate the outcomes of their actions, which prompts them to anticipate what possible measures to undertake to prepare. By being proactive in their communication, they think about the future and focus on what they can do to avoid potential problems. The researcher also observed that the organization is focused on equipping the staff members with futures thinking and strategic foresight (FTSF) competencies. Several group interactions were conducted in a platform they call HR Exchange (HReX). This is a platform where staff are encouraged to attend, discuss, and explore more on topics like FTSF. The platform also serves as a venue or a holding environment for building effective communication and relationships. It also facilitates information dissemination, which offices/units utilize to provide orientation and updates about their respective processes and procedures. The sessions serve as a venue to gather valuable inputs to improve further techniques and practices within the Center as well as maintain their social relationships. During the FTSF HReX sessions, resource speakers were invited, while other sessions were conducted to form a regroup where staff were able to share their understanding and application of learning through storytelling and sharing of their FTSF experiences both on how they apply it in their work and family lives.

b. Use of social media and messaging applications

*“During the pandemic, we launched two online courses. **The usual practice in our office was to write formal letters of invitation to the ministries of education in other countries to recruit participants. Because of bureaucracy, communication takes several weeks. When we launched the two new courses, we still sent the formal letters, but we also made a parallel effort by posting a Call for Participants on our social media. This proved to be effective because, in just a matter of days, we received thousands of interested applicants.**”* [PI-LDM-LM]

*“During our remote work arrangement, **it became a practice to communicate mostly through social media and messaging apps (mostly Messenger, some Viber or Telegram).** Several group chats were created: office-wide, unit-wide, then specific projects. **In my observation, the biggest change in communication was the fact that it became constant.**”*

[PI-LDM-LI]

The use of social media and messaging applications also became part of the staff’s agile communication practices. They find it convenient to connect to their stakeholders, including their colleagues at work, course participants/students, and even the representatives from different ministries of education of their member countries. This may seem like informal communication for official correspondences, but through time and the limitations in physical space, this practice was later accepted by the organization. Such that it bridged the gap in the limitations of in-person interactions and, at the same time it, generated a faster feedback system. Although it may seem as if organizational functions are mixed with the staff’s personal life since social media are usually used by the staff for personal interactions, they have learned overtime how to

manage this in terms of setting time limits on reading and responding to work related messages.

c. Use of video conferencing platforms in order to arrive at a decision

***“Our face-to-face scrum meetings were done using video conferencing platforms during the pandemic. This allowed us to quickly regroup to discuss solutions despite the limitations of meeting in person during those times.”*** [PI-ERI-ER]

Similar to the use of social media and messaging applications, staff members utilized video conferencing platforms in their agile communication practices. They conduct their meetings via Zoom, MS Teams, and many other video conferencing platforms. They have meetings like the daily scrum meetings. As observed, this online meeting is usually done first thing in the morning to confirm and formalize what they had discussed in their group chats. Scrum meetings are not limited to work-related functions but also serve as an opportunity to share personal updates and check on each other's well-being. In fact, this has been a standard practice of the offices within the organization. For example, if their office head is on an out-of-the-country mission/ trip, meeting and consulting with them became possible through this practice even after the work arrangement has returned to normal. No one felt left out since they had the opportunity to bond and talk to each other.

As described by the staff members, proactive communication practices emphasize individuals' automatic assumptions and foresight, reflecting a proactive approach to daily situations. The use of social media and messaging applications during the pandemic shows the role of communication tools and technologies in organizational

agility, emphasizing the need to adapt communication practices to modern technologies (Zerfaß et al., 2018). Additionally, it was noted that the utilization of video conferencing platforms for decision-making aligns with the broader concept of agile communication within agile organizations, emphasizing replacing obsolete structures and fostering a culture of active communication (ibid).

Related to **Clustered Textural Description 2**, the *ability to adapt communication to the changing environment*, two (2) clustered structural descriptions were derived from their practices:

- a. Succinct and vivid message construction

***“One example of how I changed my communication style during the pandemic is writing emails in bullet points or giving concise updates. Because a lot of work was being done through a computer, I figured that doing this could significantly improve how fast my teammates could process information coming from me. A tangible benefit could be improved understanding.”***

[PI-ERI-ER]

Staff also adapted their communication by constructing succinct and vivid messages. For example, the writing of emails was done using bullet points. Staff understand that virtual work arrangements may lead to information overload among other staff members since staff members rely heavily on emails and messages during those times. Being concise with the sharing of information was reported to be effective as it significantly improved the staff's message exchanges. Another observation was email correspondences were also limited to designated threads, where when staff would like to inquire about a piece of information, it must be inquired in the designated email

thread specific to that topic. This was also effective since all the people involved were copy-furnished in the email. This practice has been effective not only in the efficiency of work delivered. It also allows the staff to manage their time effectively, giving them more time for personal and social interactions.

b. Utilization of technology

*“As part of the finance team, we apply an innovative approach in our agile communication practices **by utilizing technology to maintain our level of service despite the changes in work arrangements. Face-to-face meetings were replaced with virtual meetings, and our daily tasks were managed by remote access to our financial system.**” [PI-FAM-FM]*

The use of technology to innovate and practice agility in communication significantly affected the level of service delivery during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, online systems were developed in collaboration with the organization’s systems management team. These online systems are linked to the finance management software, programmed and installed in the finance staff’s desktop computers. While the online system allows a staff member, for example, to request a payment, wherever and whenever, the finance staff will still need to access them via their desktop computer to process it.

With the assistance of the systems management team, remote access to their computers was made possible. As observed, the organization's financial activities were properly managed despite the work-from-home arrangement, and delays in processing payment requests were lessened if not entirely avoided.

Another use of technology observed within the organization is the utilization of electronic survey forms, evaluations, and assessments. One example is during the administration of their competency gap assessment. They have developed an electronic version of their assessment instrument/ tool via Google Forms from the usual pen-and-paper evaluation mechanism.

The process was reported to be more efficient and convenient for both the supervisors and the staff. The electronic tool per se served as a communication tool, allowing the staff to assess and rate themselves. A copy of the responses was automatically emailed to the staff after submission. This copy is used by the staff and the supervisors to agree and discuss the results of the staff's self-assessment ratings. It has become a mechanism for easing the discussion between the staff and the supervisor as the results are readily available for them to access. The process was streamlined using technology since the tool itself is linked to a spreadsheet that automatically collates all the submitted assessment ratings responses accessible to people involved in processing the information.

The staff's adaptive communication practices, encompassing the construction of succinct and vivid messages and the utilization of technology, align with key theoretical insights from the literature on organizational communication. Crafting clear messages, particularly using bullet points and designated threads in email communication, signifies that effective communication in organizational settings constitutes the organization per se. Moreover, the innovative use of technology, such as virtual meetings and remote access to financial systems, underscores how individuals create, utilize, and share knowledge to act and make successful decisions (Norreklit, 2014).

Moreover, it signifies that in using technology, human intervention is a valuable factor in assisting in streamlining processes in order to deliver efficiently. These connections highlight the staff's efforts to integrate concepts into practical communication strategies, enhancing organizational effectiveness giving them more time to enjoy personal activities.

Related to **Clustered Textural Description 3**, *user-centric to delivering value to stakeholders*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from their practices:

a. Valuing the Stakeholders' Communication Channel Preference

*"...during the work-from-home arrangement, **instead of emailing provincial coordinators, which we usually do pre-pandemic, we message them using messaging apps. They prefer it, compared to email. We get hold of them faster. Mas mabilis ang reply.**" [PI-ERI-EU]*

Value proposition is where an organization resonates with its stakeholders through clear communication of its products and services. Part of communicating with clarity is considering the message channel preferred by the target audiences. Through this, getting the message across becomes faster and easier.

Putting importance on the stakeholders' communication channel preferences is grounded in the concept of organizational communication as a dynamic force shaping individual behavior, group interactions, and the overall organizational narrative. This practice, drawn from "Organizational Communication" by Mark (1996), aligns with the idea that communication is constitutive of the organization and plays a crucial role in building mutual relationships among employees and stakeholders. Recognizing and

adapting to stakeholders' preferred communication channels fosters effective communication, emphasizing a user-centric approach to delivering value, and underscores the importance of aligning practical strategies with theoretical insights from the literature on organizational communication. This highlights the synergy between staff practices and theoretical perspectives, emphasizing the role of communication in building and sustaining relationships within the organization and its stakeholders.

For **Clustered Textural Description 4**, *knowing the stakeholders' needs*, these clustered structural descriptions were obtained:

a. Communicating using the end-users' language

***“Very important yung receiver ng message in agile communication. Na first and foremost is the (intent of the) message pero depende how you deliver. It's not what you say. It's how you say it. Like in packaging our knowledge solutions and products. We should use the language of our target audience. Lalo sa mga research outputs natin. Makakapal and mahabang study. So what we do, we develop standalone modules. Mas ma appreciate ng end-user yun, say ng parents or the teachers. Direct to the point kapag pinackage mo siya. Hindi yung parang maraming palabok na napaka haba nating mga research report diba? Very technical pa ang language.”*** [PI-ERI-ER]

***“Aside from the pandemic, another factor is the changing needs/wants/priorities of our clients, which in our case are educators. In recent years, we noticed that teachers and school heads who join our programs are relatively younger (principals in their 30's teachers who are fresh***

*graduates). We have to modify our [communication] approach to this young audience. For example, it's easier and faster to reach them through social media rather than through formal letters coursed through their divisions or schools. Our language also had to change—less formal and more conversational.*” [PI-LDM-LM]

As shared by the staff, language plays a vital role in agile communication in communicating with the stakeholders. They identify intergenerational characteristics as one factor influencing the stakeholders' language preference. Same with the message channel, user language makes it easier and faster to get the message across; message design and presentation are other crucial factors. They give significant value to how they package their knowledge products and solutions. This ensures that stakeholders develop an appreciation of their knowledge products and make use of them.

During one of the knowledge product launches, several package forms were developed: standalone modules, infographics, podcasts, and short video reels, which they upload to their website and social media accounts. They make sure that these materials use stakeholder language, are accessible, and are within reach of their stakeholders.

b. Conduct of needs assessment and consultation

*“One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library due to many changes happening. I conducted a multi-level consultation and needs analysis (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts). I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned.*

*The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted.” [PI-KMN-IM]*

In order to know the needs of their stakeholder, staff have shared that they conduct needs assessments and consultative meetings. The process of assessing the needs can be a tedious process, especially if not everyone is involved. Consultative meetings in the form of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), interviews (structured and unstructured), and regroups are done to ensure that all points are covered and stakeholders' perspectives of the topic are considered. This informs what steps the project team shall take to deliver their projects consistently and respond to the stakeholders' requirements.

Tailoring communication to the language and preferences of end-users stresses the role of language in crafting strategies for understanding the world. Referencing Norreklit (2014) and Hahn and Paynton (n.d.), it is underscored that language plays a crucial role in shaping actions and decisions. Similarly, the literature supports the practice of conducting needs assessments and consultative meetings, emphasizing active listening, interpersonal communication, and communication competency for organizational success. It also highlighted how organizations use communication, including needs assessments and consultations, to align, learn, and converge perceptions among employees, as noted by Hahn and Paynton (n.d.) and Mark (1996).

**Clustered Textural Description 5**, *iteration and collaboration*, two (2) clustered structural descriptions were derived from staff practices:

- a. Co-designing of online systems and processes

*“As the technological infrastructure backbone of the organization, we also work hand in hand with different offices to automate their processes. We co-design these with the respective units. We conduct needs assessments, what are the requirements based on their operations manual. We align the programming of the system based on their existing process and suggest improvements when necessary. Each online system programming undergo a pilot and parallel testing, That guides us what else to improve.*

*Requests are now online. So **approvals can be made even if the people involved are not present in the office.**” [PI-KMN-SM]*

b. Use of collaboration tools facilitating seamless coordination

*“**Collaboration tools** and project management platforms, each with their own established procedures, **facilitate seamless coordination and progress tracking within the team. It guides us to manage and make necessary iterations if needed.**” [PI-LDM-LI]*

It has been a culture in the organization to be collaborative and participative, allowing them to co-design the projects or process improvements they are working on. This included automation of processes and making them available online. Although challenges with varying perspectives and ideas have been encountered, the members of the staff, enabled by the organization’s management, are able to get through the challenges.

This has been observed prior to the pandemic; their collaborative initiatives happen in group sessions like workshops where they use meta cards and flip charts to ideate.

During the first few months of the pandemic, collaboration and active participation hiccups were experienced during the work-from-home arrangement. Limitations never stopped their culture of collaboration and participation through the use of online collaborative tools like Mural, Padlet, and Canva. Other online organizing tools, such as Trello and Jira, were also utilized, allowing them to track project deliverables and progress together. The advantage of using these platforms is that they are online, and all information is stored in a cloud server, which staff can visit and utilize as a reference for their assigned tasks. This also allows them to automate some process. For example, instead of manually consolidating gathered information from regroups and workshops, all data are automatically encoded in a system that is accessible to them in an online dashboard. This guided them to make informed decisions and iterations of their projects and deliverables seamlessly, as everyone on the team could access the stored information. The staff shared this practice as one of their adaptation strategies in practicing agile communication.

The co-designing of online systems and processes perfectly aligns with participatory design principles and collaborative decision-making in organizational communication, as noted in the literature. Involving end-users and stakeholders in design and decision-making enhances system usability, effectiveness, and user satisfaction. Similarly, the use of collaboration tools for seamless coordination resonates with the literature on technology-mediated communication, reflecting the broader concept of technology supporting organizational processes. The literature suggests that effective utilization of technology tools enhances collaboration, communication, and coordination among team members. These narratives from the staff members emphasize the importance of

collaboration, participatory design, and technology tools in organizational communication.

**Clustered Textural Description 6**, *innovative and evolving process*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Practical implementation of processes and knowledge products towards improvement

*“In the context of our ISO Certification, the processes [operation manuals] nakakahelp sya. In terms of agile communication, kasi it’s up to us who we define yung process di ba? **So, we can adjust the process kasi tayo ang owner, and we would know what works best. It’s how should we define our process in such a way it’s agile.** Like, yeah, may proseso ka, may standards ka, there should be agility in it. Hindi naka kahon, how can we make the process na hindi rigid. Duon papasok ang agile communication. Like knowing when to adjust a process immediately kasi it’s not working or there are provisions or policies na hindi na touch sa process.*

*Also, **before finalizing the revisions in the OMs, we present it to the members of the staff through HReXCHANGE.** That way, collaborative sya.” [PI-ERI-ER]*

As the organization thrives on maintaining the quality of its outputs despite the challenging times, it also sees the value of having a quality management system in place. They see this as a communication tool that serves as an organizational operations reference that guides the staff members.

With the ISO certification established, all management procedures in the form of operation manuals (OM) and guidelines were developed. These OMs and guidelines are updated and revised as necessary in response to the changing circumstances that are responsive to the needs of its users. In the staff's words, "*hindi naka-kahon*", which means it is not limiting. These OMs are adjusted and revised consistent with the changing requirements and priorities. This allows them to practice agility in project management and communication. They believe that OMs must define a practical process standard that is responsive to the needs of their internal and external environment, enabling them to achieve their goals. The organization's intranet serves as a repository of all these approved OMs and guidelines, which all staff are free to access whenever they need guidance with a process standard. The OMs and guidelines serve as an organizing mechanism created from staff's meaningful communicative actions and interactions.

Another practical implementation of the organization's practices is the release or launch of pilot versions of knowledge products and solutions. They believe this is practical and effective as it informs them of the areas that need improvement. From the evaluation of the pilot activities or initial release, necessary revisions are made, which is why their knowledge products have different versions. They describe this as similar to the operating system versions of mobile phones. Part of their agile practices, which they adopted from software development, is that a product is open for improvements even after its release. These versions also serve as historical artifacts of the knowledge products' development. They believe that by doing this, they are practicing agile communication; they do not wait for a knowledge product to be perfect before they release or launch it unless it will be obsolete and can no longer serve its purpose.

***“Ang ginagawa is naglalabas ng draft or for pilot test version. Pilot test version so naging importante yung versions. Nagagamit na sya ng end-user. May historical artifacts ka na how the material evolved, coming from the versions. Parang sa mobile phones operating systems, di ba kaya nga may versions? It also applies to our knowledge products using the different versions, na okay, it came from this version, but now ito na yung latest version nya.” [PI-ERI-ER]***

The processes for improvement are related to the literature on organizational agility, which emphasizes the need for flexible and adaptive strategies to respond to changing circumstances and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. The staff's utilization of ISO's quality management system and operation manuals as communication tools demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a high-quality standard while remaining adaptable to dynamic conditions. The integration of collaborative presentations through HReXCHANGE reinforces the importance of involving staff in the process, fostering a culture of shared understanding and improvement.

**Clustered Textural Description 7, *efficient work environment***, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Understanding unique perspectives and expertise

***“When engaged in collaboration projects with other offices or units, effective agile communication practices extend to understanding the unique perspectives and expertise each team brings to the table. It improves team relationships. We do regular status updates, joint brainstorming sessions, and cross-functional team meetings foster***

***collaboration and ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding project objectives and deliverables.***” [PI-KMN-IM]

In improving the process systems they have in place, staff also shared that unique perspectives and expertise must be considered. They acknowledge each other’s areas of expertise, which creates an efficient work environment and improves their relationships at work. Regular regrouping and brainstorming sessions are just a few measures they reported during the data gathering. Other practices were also observed for large groups such as the General Assembly, where non-international and international staff, including the executives, are present. Different committees were also established in order to ensure smooth operation within the Center. They engage in a dialogical discussion in order to create mutually decided agreements.

In pursuing the creation of an efficient work environment through agile communication practices, the staff members’ descriptions resonate with principles emphasized in the literature, which contributes to enhanced collaboration and overall team performance. The staff members’ descriptions of regular status updates, joint brainstorming sessions, and cross-functional team meetings underscore a commitment to maintaining clear communication channels. These practices foster collaboration, align team members toward common objectives, and ensure a shared understanding of project goals and deliverables.

**Clustered Textural Description 8**, *simple, direct, and face-to-face communication*,

two (2) clustered structural descriptions were derived from staff practices:

- a. Veering away from the bureaucratic process

*“For example, the process of issuance of travel insurance. The service provider will process the request if we submit the duly accomplished forms and copy of the ID of the persons to be insured. **Sometimes, we need to alter our communications to be able to deliver the task because most of the requests are urgent. Dito pumapasok na makikiusap ka directly sa agent para lang ma-process ang insurance at minsan kailangan mangulit para sa follow ups ng forms. We set meetings with them. That also eliminates bureaucracy.**” [PI-FAM-HR]*

b. Open and flat communication

*“...when you request a service from another unit/department, you would usually approach the person first to give them a heads up, ask about their schedule and workload, etc., before formalizing your request through email, memo, or intranet job requests.” [PI-LDM-LM]*

Open and flat communication is one of the most mentioned practices during data gathering. Staff prefer open and flat communication to avoid bureaucratic processes. They do this by altering their communication strategies as needed. Staff often approach colleagues for information in person. According to them, it is more straightforward and more direct. After their face-to-face discussions, they formalize their interactions through the filing of requests through memos, emails, or intranet job requests as a mode of evidence, verification, and documentation.

In veering away from bureaucratic processes, insights suggest that streamlining communication enhances efficiency, emphasizing flexibility in communication methods for urgent tasks or complex processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The staff's practice

of engaging directly with service providers for urgent tasks, like processing travel insurance, reflects a pragmatic approach to achieving efficient results, emphasizing the importance of direct communication to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy. In embracing open and flat communication structures, insights highlight that such structures foster collaboration, transparency, and a culture of shared responsibility within an organization (ibid). Direct communication with colleagues before formalizing requests aligns with these principles, facilitating informal discussions, understanding workload constraints, and promoting a smoother exchange of information before formal documentation (ibid).

**Clustered Textural Description 9**, *transparency in communicating*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Disclosure of all relevant information

***“Communication systems among team/unit members have always been open and transparent. Relevant project information, updates, and concerns, including feedback, are shared among team members at any point during the project implementation so necessary adjustments can be made.***

***These practices are in place whether during face-to-face (e.g., during informal talks along the hallways, coffee or lunch break, we just go to each other’s workstations) or remote work arrangements (e.g., emails, texts, audio/video calls).”*** [PI-KMN-IM]

During the formal and informal discussions, staff ensure they disclose all relevant information to everyone involved. They do this all throughout the project implementation. They have documents like a project implementation plan (PIP), which

includes all primary information on how to proceed with a particular project. It was developed and designed collaboratively and is open for iterations, especially if external factors are out of their control. Disclosure of information happens both in formal and informal procedures. Sometimes, it could be through a formal meeting, sometimes during brown bag sessions during breaks, or just by approaching a colleague in their workstations.

The openness ensures that all team members are well-informed, fostering collaboration and contributing to project adaptability. Both formal and informal communication channels play a crucial role in this. The staff's commitment to sharing project information, updates, and concerns reflects established transparency principles. Whether through formal mechanisms like meetings or informal interactions, the disclosure of relevant information enhances project adaptability, leading to its delivery. The emphasis on collaborative development and openness to iteration underscores a dynamic communication approach responsive to changing circumstances.

**Clustered Textural Description 10**, *feedback loops*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

- a. Quick and consistent feedbacking

*“...instead of emailing a colleague and we are both present in the office, I would usually go to his office. Ilan minutes lang naman papunta sa kanya. Direct and mabilis ang feedback. Instead of emailing then mag-aantay pa ako ng sagot. Consistent din ang feedback especially pag face-to-face interaction.”* [PI-KMN-KR]

*“During remote work arrangements, **I also recognize the importance of regular feedback loops. This includes soliciting feedback from both instructors and students through surveys, virtual meetings, and other channels.** This iterative feedback process allows for continuous improvement in communication practices and helps address any emerging challenges promptly.” [PI-LDM-LI]*

*“During our remote work arrangement, **it became a practice to communicate mostly through social media and messaging apps (mostly Messenger, some Viber or Telegram).** Several group chats were created: office-wide, unit-wide, then specific projects. **In my observation, the biggest change in communication was the fact that it became constant.**” [PI-LDM-LM]*

Disclosing relevant information in formal and informal settings encouraged quick and consistent feedback. As the cliché says, feedback is a gift. Staff give premium to feedback as they find it essential in their project management and communication practices. It informs their decision-making and strategic directions. It was reported that this had been an institutional practice even prior to the pandemic. In fact, this was one of their significant adaptation strategies during the early implementation of the work-from-home set-up. Later on, they discovered that messaging applications are an effective way to bridge the gap in communicating with colleagues. Mobile phone calls and videoconferencing were also instrumental in gaining quick and constant feedback from colleagues.

Quick and consistent feedback is crucial for effective communication within organizations, as highlighted by insights from the literature. Face-to-face interactions are recognized for facilitating immediate responses and fostering dynamic information exchange. The staff acknowledges feedback as a valuable resource for decision-making. Adapting feedback mechanisms to various communication contexts, whether in-person or remote, reflects a commitment to continuous improvement in communication practices. The use of diverse channels, such as surveys, virtual meetings, and messaging apps during remote work, underscores the importance of tailoring feedback approaches to the communication context. This demonstrates a willingness to leverage technology for efficient and timely feedback, enhancing the overall communication process.

**Clustered Textural Description 11**, *more than a management principle*, two (2) clustered structural descriptions were derived from staff practices:

a. Working under minimal supervision

***“...we are relatively small but we have big projects, big and sometimes simultaneous projects. Bureaucracy is a tendency in any organization. Napaalam mo na ba ‘yan sa boss ganyan ganyan. Ang daming layers diba? So, what we do meron tayo prior pasabi or nag cocommunicate na tayo... Bago pa nila gawin yung usual process. That’s what we do here. ISO Certified tayo, dalawa pang certification. We have conscious effort, hindi na kailangan pang sabihan. We work under minimal supervision.”***

[PI-KMN-EM]

b. Thinking outside the box

*“Agile communication encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and autonomous. Staff are not afraid of mistakes. **They think outside the box.** Pero di naman yung significant mistake na ikakasira ng center. It’s more of calculated risks. **Kasama na din duon yung intellectual humility ng staff na they know that mistakes are also part of the learning process.**” [PI-ERI-ER]*

Another reported description of agile communication in the organization is that the staff believes that it is more than just a management principle. Staff have a conscious effort to deliver their commitments and exceed expectations. They think outside the box by going the extra mile. They do not wait for instructions from their supervisors; instead, they do what is deemed appropriate. As earlier mentioned, they are guided by their performance development contracts (PDC), a contract that consists of all their deliverables and targets for a fiscal year. It also becomes their guide in maintaining their work-life balance.

Staff also believe that mistakes are part of the process, allowing them to learn and innovate. One of the findings of the organization’s competency gap assessment held in 2023 is that staff are able to develop contextual adaptability (or being madiskarte). They are unconventional thinkers, this guide them to think and implement apropos solutions, making things happen. They have the ability to make informed decisions by exhibiting research and data-based decision-making skills by generating and identifying relevant ways to achieve their goals. Another important finding of this competency assessment is the staff’s intellectual humility. It states that staff are open to suggestions and exploring new ways of doing things.

The description is that agile communication goes beyond a management principle and is deeply rooted in the staff members' dedication to autonomy, innovation, and proactive problem-solving. The inclination towards working under minimal supervision aligns with principles of self-organization and autonomy in agile methodologies, fostering a culture of trust and responsibility as individuals take ownership of their work, resulting in increased efficiency (ibid). Additionally, the staff's emphasis on thinking outside the box, embracing creativity, experimentation, and calculated risk-taking resonates with the agile principle of encouraging adaptive and innovative thinking. Their acceptance of mistakes as part of the learning process mirrors the agile value of continuous improvement (ibid). Moreover, the staff's demonstration of intellectual humility and openness to suggestions align with the agile mindset of valuing collaboration and diverse perspectives, contributing to the organization's adaptive capacity and strategic problem-solving.

**Clustered Textural Description 12**, *embedded in project management practice*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Operate projects within the framework

*“...we frequently deal with rush and urgent transactions. It shows our versatility in terms of how we deliver our work. **Nevertheless, we continue to operate projects within the framework of the procedures [project implementation plans, OMs] we have in place.** As a Senior Associate, they are counting on me to check, verify, and process documents given that my particular work has a cascading effect on others; time management is also crucial to us.” [PI-FAM-FM]*

Their belief that agile communication is embedded in their project management system can be found in how they operate projects within a specified framework. However, they also consider external factors that may hamper the delivery of their projects. That is why they ensure that documents are processed, checked, and verified within a defined timeline while also maintaining alternative and proactive mechanisms in order to get back on track in cases of delays. Aside from these, staff, in general, are focused on following the project's lifecycle as identified at the onset of the project implementation, which they try to follow until the project's completion. They strive to abide by it as much as possible as they understand that being on track with the framework will allow them to finish on time and even ahead of time.

Drawing insights from the literature, the staff members' commitment to operating projects within an established framework aligns with agile principles, valuing processes and tools while remaining responsive to change, ensuring efficient project management with the ability to accommodate necessary adjustments (Beck et al., 2001). Their focus on time management and recognizing the cascading effects of their work resonates with agile principles, prioritizing individuals and interactions, responding to change, and delivering working solutions. This approach contributes to the organization's ability to navigate urgent transactions while maintaining a commitment to project integrity.

**Clustered Textural Description 13**, *ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

- a. Adjusting of processes to avoid working in silos

***“In the context of our ISO Certification, the processes [operation manuals] nakakahelp sya. In terms of agile communication, kasi it’s up to us who we define yung process di ba? So, we can adjust the process kasi tayo ang owner and we would know what works best. It’s how should we define our process in such a way it’s agile. Like, yeah, may proseso ka, may standards ka, there should be agility in it. Hindi naka kahon, how can we make the process na hindi rigid. Duon papasok ang agile communication. Like knowing when to adjust a process immediately kasi it’s not working or there are provisions or policies na hindi na touch sa process.”***

[PI-ERI-ER]

As they describe agile communication as the ability to pivot strategies, structures, and procedures, they understand that this means they are able to adjust them to avoid working in silos. This includes changing strategies as necessary, especially if they do not deliver the desired results. As already mentioned, they make sure that they share relevant project information in order to make necessary adjustments to avoid an organizational condition where misalignment happens, leading to the collapse of a project or the organization as a whole.

The description that agile communication is the capacity to pivot strategies, structures, and processes underscores the vital role of adaptability within the organization. This is evident in the staff members’ emphasis on adjusting processes, aligning with the agile principle of responding to change over following a plan. Their recognition of the importance of agility in defining processes reflects a commitment to flexibility and avoidance of rigid, siloed structures that may impede collaboration and responsiveness (ibid). Overall, their understanding of agile communication involves continuous

assessment and modification of processes to align with organizational goals, facilitating effective navigation of changing circumstances and fostering a culture of adaptability and collaboration.

**Clustered Textural Description 14**, *responding to change without compromising the quality of work*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Staying focused and objective

***“One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library due to many changes happening. I conducted a multi-level consultation and needs analysis (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts). I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned. The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted.”*** [PI-KMN-IM]

Staff also give value to delivering work with quality. Staying focused and objective is one of their adaptation strategies in order to do this despite changes in the environment. They do this by conducting objective measures such as needs analysis and multi-level consultations. They do not let the crisis get to them; instead, they make necessary procedures to stay objective and focused. They do what is necessary in their capacity and involve people who can help them achieve their goals.

In addressing change while upholding work quality, the staff underscores the significance of maintaining focus and objectivity, aligning with agile principles

prioritizing individuals and interactions over processes and tools. This approach allows them to adapt to change without compromising work quality. Their emphasis on multi-level consultation and needs analysis reflects a dedication to understanding stakeholders' perspectives and aligning efforts with project goals in line with agile principles (ibid). In this structural description, the staff showcases their adeptness in navigating environmental changes by prioritizing clear communication, consultation, and a steadfast focus on objectives, consistent with agile principles that promote flexibility while ensuring the delivery of high-quality outcomes.

**Clustered Textural Description 15**, *timely delivery of project*, one (1) clustered structural description was derived from staff practices:

a. Finding ways to deliver commitments

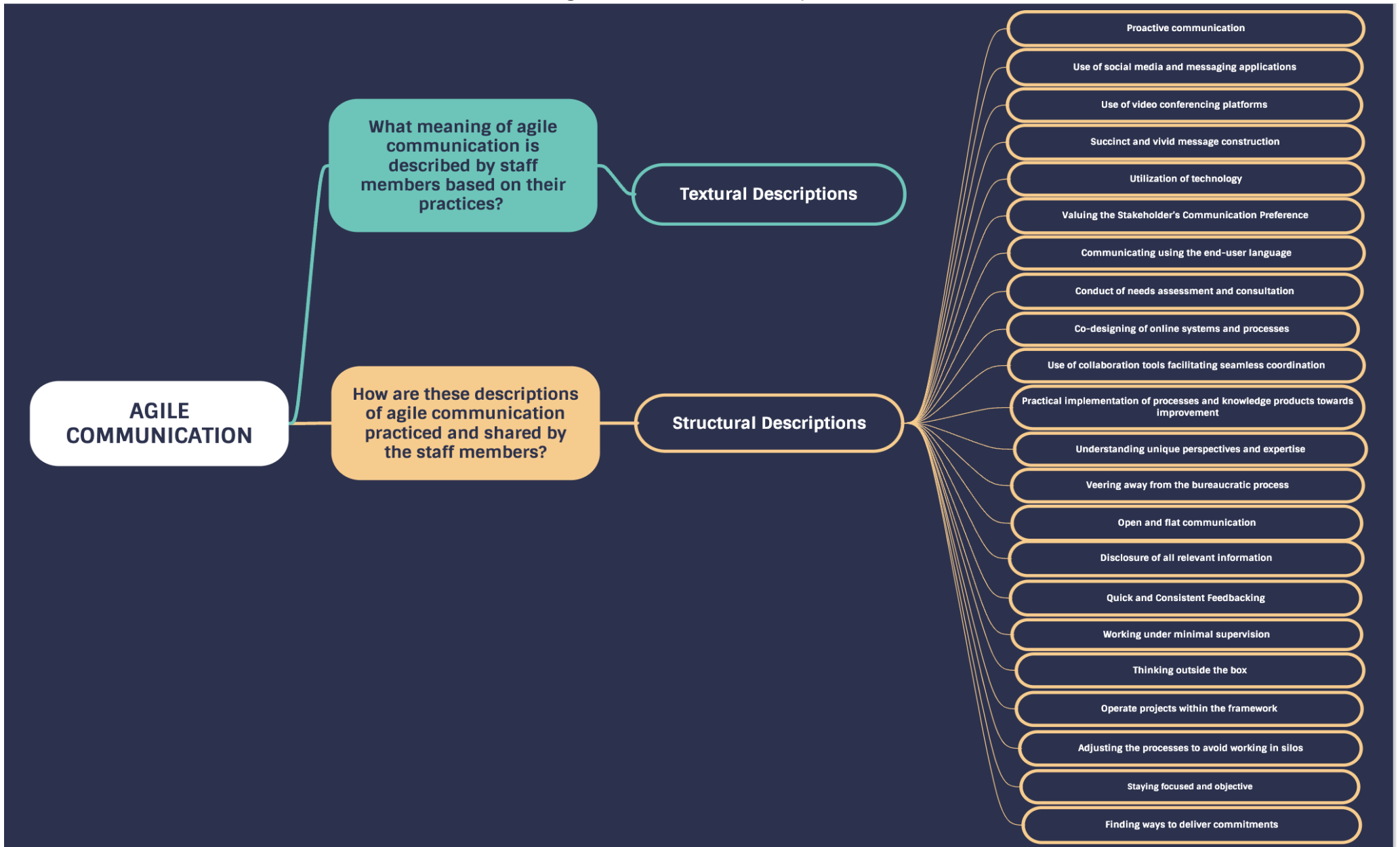
***“I can say that part of our agility in communicating is that we operate on an open, consultative communication lines.. We do not have stringent layers whenever we want to get to communicate with a colleague or a superior. We used various platforms to communicate (such as Facebook Messenger, Viber, Telegram, Email, Watercooler Wednesdays etc.) and whenever there is an important task to do—the team pull everyone’s strength to contribute and ensure the timely and quality completion of the work.”*** [PI-LDM-LM]

Staying objective and focused also leads to the staff’s timely delivery of projects. They do these by finding possible ways to deliver. As mentioned earlier, staff have contextual adaptability competency; they go the extra mile by maintaining open, consultative communication. They avoid working in silos by constantly sharing essential information through different communication mediums and channels.

In striving for timely project delivery, the staff members highlighted the significance of open and consultative communication, which resonates with the agile principles noted by Beck et al. (2001). The emphasis on individuals and interactions over processes and tools aligns with the team's focus on effective communication lines. Utilizing various communication platforms echoes the agile value of responding to change over following a plan. By leveraging the collective strength of the team, they ensure the timely and quality completion of work, highlighting the importance of collaboration and adaptability in achieving project goals.

In total, 22 clustered themes of agile communication's structural descriptions were derived from the responses of the co-researchers. These practices are what they continue to do and reproduce within the organization. The practices are observed to be dialogic in nature, using various ways of communicating, including the message intent, design, language, and mediums or channels.

Figure 6. Structural Descriptions



## **Essential Themes of Agile Communication**

The previous sections centered on textural and structural descriptions of the staff members' experiences with agile communication. This is summarized and presented in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 5 and 6. These experiences were analyzed and interpreted from the data gathered from interviews. It followed the phenomenological data analysis, where analyses were compared to other data-gathering methods such as researcher observations and related pieces of literature verifying accuracy and clear representation across data sources. Horizons were identified and clustered into themes that generated the invariant constituents, or the core themes of experience explained using narratives that facilitated understanding of participants' experiences. This was then followed by imaginative variation, where the researcher utilized the meaning units of textural descriptions and incorporated them into a structure explaining how the experiences occurred, generating the essential themes of the phenomenon.

This section describes the six (6) essential themes of agile communication with their corresponding textural and structural descriptions in an international educational organization:

**Table 4. Essential Themes of Agile Communication**

What is the essence of agile communication in an agile international educational organization?

<b>Essential Themes</b>	<b>Composite: Textural Descriptions</b>	<b>Composite: Structural Descriptions</b>
<b>Flexible and Adaptive Communication in Managing Changes</b>	a. <i>Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to the changing circumstances</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proactive communication</li> <li>- Use of social media and messaging applications</li> <li>- Use of video conferencing platforms</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Ability to adapt communication to changing environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Succinct and vivid message construction</li> <li>- Utilization of technology</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder Centered</b>	a. <i>User-centric to delivering value to stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Valuing the stakeholder's communication preference</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Knowing the stakeholders' needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicating using the end-users language</li> <li>- Conduct of needs assessment and consultation</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborative, Innovative and Iterative Process Promoting Efficient Work Environment</b>	a. <i>Iteration and collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-designing of online systems and processes</li> <li>- Use of collaboration tools facilitating seamless coordination</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Innovative and evolving process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practical implementation of processes toward improvement</li> </ul>
	c. <i>Efficient work environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular regrouping to keep everyone in the loop</li> </ul>
<b>Direct and Transparent Interpersonal Communication</b>	a. <i>Simple, direct, and face-to-face communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Veering away from the bureaucratic process</li> <li>- Open and flat communication</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Transparency in communicating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disclosure of all relevant information</li> </ul>
	c. <i>Feedback loops</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quick and consistent feedbacking</li> </ul>
<b>Embedded in Organizational Culture and Processes</b>	a. <i>More than a management principle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working under minimal supervision</li> <li>- Thinking outside the box</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Project management practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operate projects within the framework</li> </ul>
	c. <i>Ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjusting processes to avoid working in silos</li> </ul>
<b>Maintaining Quality Work Outputs (Performance)</b>	a. <i>Responding to change without compromising the quality of work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staying focused and objective</li> </ul>
	b. <i>Timely delivery of project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finding ways to deliver commitments</li> </ul>

\*Please see Appendix F for Data Coding: Essential Themes

## **Flexible and Adaptive Communication in Managing Changes**

According to the co-researchers, flexible and adaptive communication in managing changes is one of the key factors in agile communication. It was described as being flexible to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to changing circumstances. It involves practices such as proactive communication, using social media and messaging applications, and videoconferencing platforms in order to continue interactions and make informed decisions. Being in an international educational innovation and technology organization, it can be discerned based on their sharing that these practices were present in the organization before the pandemic. The organization has been long aware of the rapid technological advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has been adapting to the requirements of the Industrial Revolution 4 (IR4). In fact, one participant shared that their years of preparations for crises like the pandemic put their years of study to the test. The staff members accepted and adapted these practices since they understood that this was the only way they could thrive due to the limitations during the pandemic and the work-from-home arrangement. It was also shared that these practices have remained in the organization even after the work arrangement has returned to normal. These practices helped them to maintain their lifeworld while they continued to deliver their commitments and keep the trust of their stakeholders, especially their partner funding agencies and clientele.

Another description generated under this emergent theme is the ability to adapt communication. Delays in information sharing and processing may and can result in dysfunction in communication, leading to failure of a project or deliverable, as well as affecting the personal lives of the staff members. Practices exhibited to avoid this are succinct and vivid messaging and using technology, which includes remote access to

desktop computers. The staff have shared that these practices were discovered along the way in making things and interactions work. During the pandemic, the work-from-home arrangement blurred the line that separates staff's personal and professional lives. They had to think of a way to avoid this from happening. They realized that constructing messages in email correspondences using bullet points and in plain language significantly improved the information processing of the receivers. This resulted in the team's quick understanding of a topic or project. They also engaged in scrum meetings utilizing videoconferencing applications and collaboration tools to maintain open dialogic communication exchanges. Remote access was also one of the reported communication adaptation strategies from the staff, especially those from administrative positions. Since they utilize systems installed in their desktop computers in their offices to perform their daily tasks, remote access allows them to still perform their jobs even if they are working from home. In turn, these practices allowed them to accomplish their deliverables faster, giving them more time for their families.

Flexible and adaptive communication emphasizes the constitutive nature of communication within organizations. This is underscored by how communication practices are not only influenced by the external environment but also how they actively shape the organization through its staff members' response to changes. The importance of effective communication in achieving organizational goals, as discussed in the literature, emphasizes the theme of maintaining commitments and trust with stakeholders through flexible and adaptive communication.

In line with that, the theme also addresses the need for organizations to be agile, responding proactively and efficiently to changes in the internal and external

environment. It resonates with organizational agility as a key capability involving the alignment of structures, processes, culture, people, and communication tools. Finally, the challenges presented by the pandemic echoed the need for new communication skills, digital competencies, and the adaptation of communication strategies in response to the changing environment. This is consistent with exploring how organizations cope with challenges, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

In essence, these descriptions and practices define flexibility and adaptability in communicating and managing changes. This is the organization's way of anticipating and planning ahead in immediate and situational occurrences, understanding the need to accommodate changes and the people affected by them.

### **Stakeholder Centered**

Stakeholder-centeredness is another primary factor in the practice of agile communication. Descriptions generated under this essential theme are user-centric to delivering value to stakeholders and knowing their needs. Valuing the stakeholder's communication preferences serves as an anchor on how to best communicate with them. Information, however beautifully and thoughtfully constructed and packaged, if it does not use an apropos message channel or medium, will still breed difficulty in reaching its target audiences.

Moreover, knowing the needs of the stakeholders also holds an essential consideration in putting value to the stakeholders. Communicating with them can be challenging since there are barriers that the staff needs to consider. Part of these barriers are the physical and metaphysical (or mental) barriers. Language, message packaging, and

even the characteristics of the receivers must be considered and examined. These should match the needs of the stakeholders in order to eliminate barriers and raise stakeholder awareness and appreciation so they can find value in the information presented to them.

In hindsight, it can be tedious to know the stakeholders individually due to their pluralistic characteristics. One good way to examine their needs is by understanding intergenerational differences through the conduct of needs assessments, consultations (through focus group discussions, etc.), and document artifacts reviews. By knowing their intergenerational characteristics, it will be easier to know which language they prefer, what channel they can be easily reached, what knowledge product packaging is appropriate for them, and what type of information they need, responsive to their contexts.

For the organization, it means modifying their communicative approaches such as less formal and more conversational communication, the use of different multimedia in packaging and delivering their knowledge products, which include podcast series, video reels, infographics, standalone modules, and channels available, and within the reach of their stakeholder. They post and upload to their social media accounts and websites. They also made these available for download for the consumption of their stakeholders. By using these agile communication practices, the organization is able to put more value not only on its knowledge products and solutions but also on its clientele and, more importantly, on its employees.

Understanding the stakeholders' needs aligns with Habermas' Lifeworld and Systems concept, emphasizing the subjective lens through which individuals perceive the world. Adapting communication approaches based on stakeholder preferences resonates with considering the social and cultural dimensions in Habermas' framework. The alignment emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse individual realities within the lifeworld when communicating with stakeholders.

Stakeholder-centeredness also extends to the idea that communication is constitutive of organization. Recognizing and adapting to stakeholders' intergenerational differences and preferences is consistent with the notion that organizational culture is shaped by communication among individuals. This modification of communication approaches reflects an understanding that communication practices actively contribute to the organization's identity.

On a related note, stakeholder-centeredness highlights the adaptability of communication approaches based on stakeholders' needs, reflecting the agility required to navigate the complexities of stakeholder interactions. This aligns with the broader concept of organizational agility, where structures, processes, and communication tools must align to respond to changing circumstances.

Finally, the challenges brought about by the pandemic, such as the shift to remote work and the need for new communication skills, resonate with stakeholder-centeredness. Understanding and addressing physical and metaphysical barriers forge alignment and convergence of perceptions among employees and stakeholders.

## **Collaborative, Innovative, and Iterative Process Promoting Efficient Work Environment**

Collaboration, innovation, and iteration promoting an efficient work environment are other considerations in agile communication. When faced with an unfamiliar situation, one can never go wrong when one possesses these hallmarks. Iteration and collaboration are something the organization puts a significant premium on in its agile communication practices. In order to produce holistic outputs, collaboration activities are held in the form of workshops and regrouping activities. These allow them to gather information and merge perspectives, guiding them to co-design, ideate, and make necessary adjustments in their projects, strategies, and processes. When an organization prioritizes the importance of collaboration, it creates a culture of cooperation and active participation among the members of the organization. An organization must find ways to collaborate despite the limitations caused by the circumstances around them. Online collaboration tools were reported to help significantly in managing the limitations. If collaboration is done successfully, iteration initiatives are easily welcomed and accepted by the staff since they are involved, and their perspectives are consulted and considered.

In iteration, innovation comes in handy. To innovate means making changes by introducing new methods, ideas, or even products. Innovation is a hit-or-miss process, making it an evolving process. That's why one of the practices shared by the staff members is releasing versions of their knowledge products. By doing this, they are able to get feedback and are made aware of the areas for improvement. Moreover, information does not become obsolete because of its timely release and is still relevant for end-user consumption. Waiting for the knowledge products to be perfect before

releasing them is impractical since circumstances incessantly change, making them outdated.

Agile communication practices also promote an efficient work environment. It guides the staff to consider the unique perspectives and expertise of the people they work with. Relationships improve if people give due respect to each other. Respecting their belief system, their time and schedule, and their overall perspectives in general. It also becomes instrumental in maintaining each other's personal relationships. Creating a culture of cooperation and active participation is consistent with the constitutive nature of communication, where organizational behaviors and structures emerge through ongoing communication processes by emphasizing the role of collaboration in shaping the organization's culture.

The iterative and collaborative nature of communication practices relates with the organizational agility required in today's dynamic environment, emphasizing collaboration despite limitations, using online tools to manage constraints, and embracing iteration as a means of adapting to evolving circumstances.

### **Direct and Transparent Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication is essential, especially if it is direct, simple, and face-to-face. For agile communication to be just that, it must veer away from bureaucratic processes and must be open and flat. The staff practiced these by approaching the concerned individual in person, talking and engaging in discussion with them, altering their communication when needed. These allow the conversation to get to the point quickly and clearly. Simple, direct, and face-to-face communication

minimizes the chance of miscommunication while using plain and common language, which makes the communication actionable and pragmatic. These practices also eliminate the exhaustive layers of he said, she said communication, making it open and flat.

Open and flat communication encourages collaboration and creativity among the staff since it can be likened to everyone being on the same level; in the words of the staff members, it is bottom-up. Unlike in tall communication, there is a hierarchy that must be traveled down through. Tall communication also leads to a lack of creativity and innovation among people. That said, open and flat communication does not mean it bypasses authorities. It just means that people are free to communicate and share their ideas and knowledge in a holding or enabling environment. They are able to avoid the weight of alienation and the lack of shared meaning and purpose (Awati, 2013). Innovation and ideation among themselves have become standard practices that provide safe spaces for everyone to collaborate and participate.

This practice leads to transparency in communication. All relevant information is accessible to all people involved. There is agency among the staff to share what they know since what they know can be crucial in a project or deliverable. Information sharing and engaging in conversations and interactions do not have to be in a formal set-up; most of the time, staff members do it through informal interactions such as watercooler and brown bag sessions. The organization can be imagined as a system not made of positions and/ or roles but of people engaging in a series of effective communication, creating ideas and shared meanings. Through ongoing meaningful conversations and interactions, they create order and organization within the

workplace as well as align their organizational life with their personal life, avoiding the former to overpower the latter.

This kind of communication also allows a quick and consistent feedback system, creating a clear picture of information and increasing transparency. Quick and consistent feedback also avoids repetitive mistakes. Feedback plays a crucial role in organizations like this international educational organization, as it assists in adopting new knowledge faster. Messaging applications are instrumental in maintaining a consistent feedback loop. This has been one of the practices within the organization during the pandemic, which they still practice nowadays with a conscious effort not to be a nuisance to their colleague and avoid repetitive messaging, especially when it is uncalled for.

Relating this to the literature, the emphasis on direct, simple, face-to-face communication signifies the genuine communicative action highlighted in Habermas' framework of pragmatics in language. Open and flat communication practices relate to the rejection of distortions like deceit and manipulation. This alignment emphasizes the importance of transparent and honest communication, where individuals construct meanings openly without distortions.

Likewise, open and flat communication contributes to the constitutive nature of communication. Viewing the organization as a system where people engage in continuous communication to create ideas and meanings aligns with the perspective that communication produces organization, and the constant interaction among members shapes the organization.

The emphasis on quick and consistent feedback and the use of messaging applications also resonates with the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Despite the challenges, the need for efficient communication during remote work is addressed through transparent and direct communication practices, ensuring a clear flow of information and feedback.

Finally, the direct and transparent communication practices underscore the need for organizational agility. This allows for quick and precise exchanges of information, minimizing the chance of miscommunication. The openness and flat structure contribute to a collaborative and creative environment, which is essential for adapting to changes and fostering innovation.

### **Embedded in Organizational Culture and Processes**

Although there is no reported established document or standards of agile communication within the organization until this study, staff believe that it is embedded in their organizational culture and processes. They also believe that it is more than just a management principle. Agile communication within the organization is conscientiously practiced among project teams and units. They describe this as a bottom-up agile communication practice. This is practiced by working under minimal supervision. Staff are aware of their tasks and deliverables. While this may be related to the systems they have in place, staff also have a conscious effort to maintain their lifeworld. Another significant factor enabling staff to function effectively is their employee development committee (EDC). This committee acts as a bridge of understanding, support, and guidance between the staff members and the management. The management is made aware of the staff's concerns through EDC,

which gives them ideas about the staff's conditions and well-being, allowing for staff to have balanced work and life activities.

Aside from ISO certifications, the organization also has performance development contracts for every staff member. This is a document that includes the deliverables and their expected period of delivery. They are not dependent on their supervisor's instructions and requests. The PDC guides the staff to manage their day-to-day activities and interactions. They are aware of what is needed from them at a particular time, allowing them to plan ahead and schedule necessary activities. Although ISO standards and PDC can be considered systems controlling the staff's activities, based on the reported staff experiences, these mechanisms also become their guide in maintaining their personal lives. They are able to manage their day-to-day interactions at work, allowing them to enjoy their personal and social activities.

This is where their contextual adaptation or being 'madiskarte' is developed. It motivates them to be unconventional thinker, allowing them to be strategic, which informs their decision-making activities. They think outside the box, developing unconventional, innovative solutions in response to emerging issues, allowing them to anticipate the changes in their environment and devise appropriate actions to ensure continuity/sustainability for themselves and the organization as a whole. Despite having systems in place, these do not hinder them from navigating their day-to-day activities, allowing them to function freely and make decisions appropriate for both the individual and the organization.

While staff believe that agile communication is more than just a management principle, it is built into their project management practices. As already mentioned, the concept of agile in project management has been present and practiced by the staff long before the pandemic. Being an international innovation and technology organization, they understand that practicing agility is critical in their project management functions. They must maintain their knowledge products and solutions to be relevant and beneficial to the educational field. That's why they work hard to operate within the framework of procedures and lifecycle they have set for a project or process. Late delivery of commitments could also mean unusable and obsolete information, resulting in wasted resources and efforts. Building from staff narratives, it can be understood that their success at work also equates to personal fulfillment, making them feel good about themselves.

In order to avoid wasted resources and efforts, **staff have also realized that strategies, structures, or processes must not manage the way they do work.** Instead, these should be instrumental in how quickly or fast they can deliver. Revisiting processes and guidelines at a regular interval informs the staff if there are steps that need to be updated or eliminated in the process; these are steps that do not serve their purpose or are repetitive in nature. This elimination avoids the vicious cycle of working in silos. Working in silos means being misaligned with a goal, and people working in a team or organization do not communicate enough. Processes regarding operation manuals and guidelines serve as a form of communication within an organization. It can be considered as a form of agile communication as the document communicates and coordinates directly and clearly with the user what things or steps are imperative to engage in in order to perform a task.

The theme that agile communication is embedded in organizational culture and processes aligns with the theoretical concepts on communication and organizational behavior discussed in the literature. Continuous evaluation of processes aligns with the need to distinguish between systems and the lifeworld in Habermas' framework.

This alignment underscores the role of individuals' lifeworld considerations in shaping organizational culture and communication practices. This mirrors the Interpretative/Critical school of thought, where communication actively produces organization. The staff members' conscientious project management practices, coupled with continuous process evaluation, resonate with the principles of organizational agility, emphasizing responsiveness to change. Their unconventional thinking aligns with leadership principles supporting innovative work behavior during challenging times.

### **Maintaining Quality Work Outputs (Performance)**

Agile communication also means being able to maintain the quality of work outputs. This indicates the organization and its staff are able to respond to change without compromising their projects and deliverables. Staff have reported to do this by staying focused and objective. This means coming up with creative solutions and innovations backed by sufficient research while considering multiple ideas and perspectives.

The use of scientific methods maintains objectivity and focus in decision-making. The staff members do this by conducting needs assessments, consultative meetings, and focus group discussions, gathering relevant data that will help them generate and

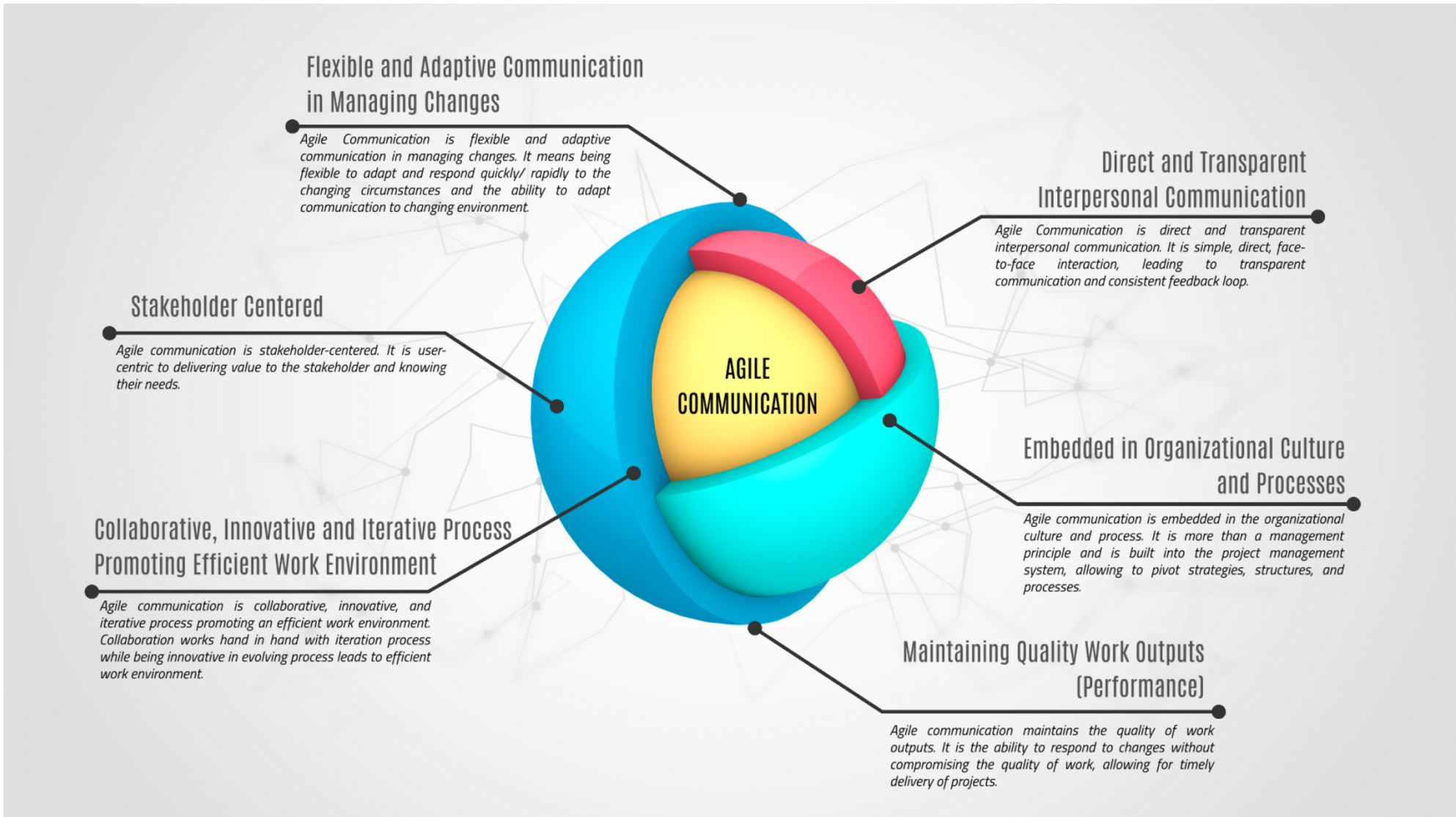
identify ways to achieve their strategic goals. They stay focused by not allowing distractions, like committing mistakes, to slow them. Instead, they treat this as a learning process to be efficient and aware. Staff are open to taking calculated risks if the circumstances require it. They maintain intellectual humility and seek help when needed through coaching and mentoring from their supervisors. They have the capacity to take on new and unfamiliar tasks by being aware of their limitations through staff development initiatives and learning from them, thereby ensuring the delivery of quality outputs.

These practices and qualities allow them to deliver projects on time as they treat the timely delivery of commitments as a hallmark of agile communication. All their efforts, if late or delayed, will no longer serve their purpose, and for them, time is of essential consideration. Overall, it boils down to finding ways and making things possible. For them, a project delivered late is no longer of use. They also consider the late delivery of work output to be less time spent on their personal and social lives.

The idea that agile communication equates to maintaining the quality of work reveals a nuanced understanding of agile communication practices. The constitutive nature of communication in organizations is reflected in the focus on consultative meetings and group discussions, which is consistent with the Interpretative/Critical School. The theme of organizational agility aligns with the organization's capacity to respond to change without compromising quality, emphasizing the importance of structures, culture, people, and communication tools. Effective group communication, seen in collaborative practices like consultative meetings, corresponds with the broader importance of group communication within organizations.

Staff experiences play a crucial role in shaping agile communication, with a willingness to take on new tasks and seek mentorship contributing to organizational agility. Finally, acknowledging challenges brought about by the pandemic underscores the necessity for agile communication strategies, resonating with the broader literature on organizational adaptation during times of significant change.

**Figure 7. Essential Themes**



## Synthesis of Agile Communication

Following the lens of Phenomenological Communication Tradition as introduced by Craig (1999), this study attempted to describe and contextualize agile communication in an international educational organization. Essential themes emerged following the phenomenological interviewing method and data gathering and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). As the communication tradition's core, the knowledge produced here is dialogic in nature. The framework used evolved in the process of seeking reality from the co-researchers narratives of their lived experiences or lifeworld (Cileciz, 2009; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994), in this case, their experience of agile communication. It also followed the language pragmatics concepts of Habermas and Searle (Please see Appendices D, E, and F for Data Coding). It focused on exploring the subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants, aiming to understand how they make meaning of their experiences and how they interpret them through their communicative actions and practices.

Additionally, by utilizing Habermas' framework as a lens, **the study distinguished between systems and the lifeworld, emphasizing the impact of communicative actions on societal steering and the potential for lifeworld colonization.** The ethical and moral dimensions of communication, noted by Habermas, resonated throughout the study, contributing to moralization in the lifeworld. Utilizing Habermas' Four Truth Claims and Searle's Speech Acts, the study acknowledged the significance of fostering genuine communicative action. The importance of truth (cognitive), truthfulness (normative), appropriateness (ethical), and comprehensibility (aesthetic) were highlighted in the data coding, emphasizing the hindrances of distortions such as deceit and manipulation. Truth claims helped to rationalize discourse within the inquiry,

which guided the researcher in analyzing the gathered data objectively. Data coding based on Habermas' Truth Claims showed that most of the statements fall under normative claim, which means that the participants' utterances are sincere and authentic and that they also involve moral dimensions that ensure honest expression of their beliefs.

Moreover, data coding results of textural and structural descriptions from the participants following Searle's Speech Acts, categorized as; **representatives** (expressing facts or opinions), **directives** (making requests or commands), **commissives** (committing to future actions), **expressives** (conveying psychological states), and **declarations** (immediately changing a situation), showed that most of the utterances fall under representatives. Representative utterances are produced based on the speaker's beliefs based on their observations and experiences. According to Searle (1983), representatives are speech acts, which are statements of fact, descriptions, suggestions, or information. This means that the utterances made by the participants are what they believe is true and factual in their contexts.

Furthermore, drawing from Husserl's phenomenology, the study emphasized the lifeworld and conscious experiences in structuring consciousness. The examination of the lifeworld uncovered structures and meanings within individual experiences, focusing on intentional consciousness and the interconnectedness of consciousness, lifeworld, and body. This application enriched the study by providing a nuanced exploration of the staff's experiences with agile communication.

This phenomenological study allowed the researcher to indulge and make sense with the co-researchers, opening a new perspective and understanding of agility, focusing on the communication concept. Agile communication is seen through the use of processes, structures, tools, adaptation strategies, and social interactions among the staff members, including their knowledge, skills, and values. This is consistent with the available literature that for an organization to be agile, six factors must be aligned (Zerfaß, 2018): structures and processes, culture and people, and (communication) tools and technologies.

To answer the third research question, this study proposes that the essence of agile communication in an agile international educational organization is composed of these six (6) emergent themes:

1. Agile Communication is flexible and adaptive communication in managing changes. It means being flexible to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to changing circumstances and the ability to adapt communication to changing environments.
2. Agile communication is stakeholder-centered. It is user-centric to delivering value to the stakeholder and knowing their needs.
3. Agile communication is a collaborative, innovative, and iterative process promoting an efficient work environment. Collaboration works hand in hand with the iteration process while being innovative in the evolving process, leading to an efficient work environment.
4. It is also direct and transparent interpersonal communication. Agile communication is simple, direct, face-to-face interaction, leading to transparent communication and a consistent feedback loop.

5. It is embedded in organizational culture and process. It is more than a management principle and is built into the project management system, allowing to pivot strategies, structures, and processes.
6. And finally, it maintains the quality of work outputs and performance. It is the ability to respond to changes without compromising the quality of work, allowing for the timely delivery of projects.

It is important to note that all essential themes were elucidated through the staff's dialogical interactions and sensemaking. Agile communication allowed them to utilize proper tools, including revisions and iterations of processes, with the people utilizing such on top of their minds. Unlike the definitions of agile in organizations, which focus more on enhancing organizational performance to achieve strategic priorities (Kristensen et al., 2021), **this study produced a communication-centric definition of agile**. The current definitions of agile in organizations resonate with the notion of the systems progressing at the expense of individuals' lifeworld by aligning strategies, IT infrastructures, structure, and processes in order to achieve strategic priorities driven by the organizations' management.

What sets this study's description and contextualization of agile communication apart is that **although it has similarities with the current operational definition** of the phenomenon, **it emerged from continuous meaningful dialogical interactions and sensemaking of the staff members of the organization under study**. The emergent essential themes are also consistent with the process of communication, which include communication components such as message source, encoding and constructing of

the message, selecting of a communication channel/medium, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and barriers, making it communication-centric.

This contributed to the successful delivery of communication and projects despite adversities and, **more importantly, helped the staff members maintain their lifeworld (or personal/social lives). Consistent with Habermas (1981), the primary function of agile communication within the organization is that it harmonizes and stabilizes the differing individual actions, which results in social integration and reproduction. This could be because the systems within the organization bear the right kind of relation to the staff's lifeworld. This relationship is made possible through the conscious and unconscious efforts of the staff members to maintain their lifeworld, not allowing the systems to limit them. Moreover, their organizational leadership also provides an enabling environment where the staff's voices are heard and considered.**

The phenomenon's descriptions and practices and its essential themes shed light on the staff's adaptive communication practices. It created a collective understanding of the phenomenon, confirming that their adaptive communication practices are in fact, agile communication. Finally, the study enriches our understanding by demonstrating how agile communication practices align seamlessly with established theoretical perspectives on organizational communication.

## **Chapter VI**

### **RESEARCH SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Summary**

Before fully delving into the summary of the study conduct, the research questions guiding the inquiry are reiterated as follows:

1. What meaning of agile communication is described by staff members based on their practices?
2. How are these descriptions of agile communication practiced by the staff members?
3. What is the essence (staff's experience) of agile communication in an agile international educational organization?

This study delved into the firsthand experiences of staff in an international educational organization regarding agile communication. Grounded in phenomenology, the research aimed to capture the essence of staff members' lived experiences, emphasizing the dynamic nature of their practices in a changing work environment and amid a pandemic.

Habermas' framework distinguished between systems and the lifeworld, emphasizing communicative actions and societal steering. The study applied pragmatics to analyze language, incorporating Habermas' Four Truth Claims and Searle's Speech Acts. Ethical and moral dimensions of communication, echoing Habermas, highlighted the role of rational argument and commitment to dialogic agreement in fostering ethical practices.

Communication's constitutive role in organizations was underscored, portraying it as the lifeblood sustaining rituals, stories, and relationships. The challenges brought by the pandemic prompted a reevaluation of communication practices in past agile settings.

Qualitative methods were employed to understand past group communication dynamics amidst the pandemic. Organizational agility was explored in alignment with the ever-changing environment, emphasizing trust-building communication. The study, rooted in phenomenological research, leveraged staff experiences to uncover the essence of agile communication within educational organizations.

The bridging function of phenomenological research was highlighted, offering insights for organizations. Husserl's phenomenology and its epistemological philosophy informed the study's focus on conscious experiences in structuring consciousness. The application of the reduction process allowed for a neutral exploration of past agile communication experiences.

These theoretical foundations and philosophical perspectives provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between lifeworld, communication practices, and organizational dynamics in the past context of agile communication.

The study sought to uncover underlying structures and meanings through interviews with selected staff, employing the Discourse of Understanding to emphasize comprehension of participants' perspectives, where the process of knowledge

production is dialogical, and the knowledge produced is an understanding of the lived world.

Purposive sampling ensured diverse representation, and ethical considerations involved informed consent, privacy protection, and organizational permission. Phenomenological interviewing, utilizing descriptive and structural questioning, was the primary tool. The analysis phase included phenomenological reduction, intersubjectivity, and steps like horizontalizing and clustering of meaning. Credibility was maintained through participant validation and consistency with existing literature.

Delving into the study's key findings elicited the staff members' contextual descriptions of agile communication through the following descriptions: Staff members emphasize the importance of agile communication through flexible adaptation to changing circumstances. This involves user-centric approaches, understanding stakeholder needs, and iterative collaboration to deliver value. The emphasis is on simplicity in communication, face-to-face interaction, and transparency, with a focus on feedback loops. Agile communication is seen as more than just a management principle; it is integrated into project management practices, allowing for the timely delivery of projects while maintaining quality. The ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes is highlighted as a key aspect of agile communication, enabling a responsive approach to change.

Further into the inquiry, the practical context and/or descriptions were also studied, which elucidated how the staff members describe agile communication in their context through proactive communication, using social media and messaging apps, and

leveraging video conferencing for decision-making. They focus on crafting succinct and vivid messages, utilizing technology, and respecting stakeholders' communication preferences. Communication is tailored to the end-users language, involving needs assessment, consultation, and co-designing online systems with collaboration tools. Practical implementation of processes for improvement is emphasized, along with regular regrouping to keep everyone informed, avoiding bureaucratic processes, and promoting open and flat communication. Transparency is key, with the disclosure of all relevant information. Quick and consistent feedback, working under minimal supervision, and thinking outside the box are essential aspects. Operating projects within a flexible framework, adjusting processes to prevent silos, and maintaining focus and objectivity are highlighted. Staff members also emphasize finding innovative ways to deliver commitments, reflecting an agile approach to work.

Finally, the study identified six **communication-centric** emergent/essential themes that encapsulate the essence of agile communication within an international educational organization. Firstly, agile communication is characterized by its flexibility and adaptability in managing changes, involving a rapid response to evolving circumstances and adjusting communication to suit the dynamic environment. Secondly, it is stakeholder-centered, focusing on delivering value to stakeholders and understanding their needs. Thirdly, agile communication thrives on collaboration, innovation, and iteration, fostering an efficient work environment. Additionally, it emphasizes direct and transparent interpersonal communication, utilizing face-to-face interaction and maintaining consistent feedback loops. Moreover, agile communication is deeply embedded in organizational culture and processes, surpassing the realm of a mere management principle by integrating it into the project management system,

enabling the pivot of strategies, structures, and processes. Finally, it upholds the quality of work outputs, allowing the organization to respond to changes without compromising quality and the timely delivery of projects.

### **Conclusion**

Communication can be challenging, especially in times of crisis and in an evolving environment. Various factors are involved in practicing agile communication, as well as considering varying assumptions about how, who, when, and where we communicate. Having clear communication and maintaining good, solid communication practices allow teams to foster better relationships for collaboration, agency, and workplace and family life efficiency.

Focusing clearly on the goals of communication by setting up suitable, solid communication mechanisms and practices allows people in the organization to have a balanced lifeworld and organizational life, allowing for both the individuals' and the organization's progress. **The system colonizing the lifeworld, in Habermas's words, is being addressed through the organization's agile communication practices.**

When considering the organization examined in this study and its findings, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent limitations common to organizations of its kind. Like any other entity, it grapples with its own systems and lifeworld, such as the effects of the ongoing pandemic and changes in how they do things, policies, and strategic actions. However, due to a pre-existing culture of collaboration fostered, knowledge about agile project management competencies, and with the staff members' readiness and preparedness, the organization is able to reach a mutual agreement or consensus to

address these limitations. **They do this by engaging in genuine dialogues/interactions where an enabling or holding environment is provided. This is where people's concerns and aspirations are acknowledged and acted upon. This is evident in their agile communication practices.**

Although it was mentioned that agile communication practices in the organization are currently bottom-up, this is already a step forward in preventing the system (i.e., organizational policies and the like) from demoralizing and manipulating the staff's lifeworld. For instance, with the existence of the organization's employee development committee (EDC), which acts as a bridge between the management and the members of the staff, and with other dialogic activities within the organization, the communicative rationality of the staff's lifeworld is maintained. **Anyway, the system, as Habermas reiterated, depends upon people who are capable of communicating effectively.**

Related to the Agile Manifesto, people's interactions allow the development and proper utilization of tools and processes. Interactions/Dialogues such as the ones present in the organization under study can already be considered a significant development in the organizational settings. Although these are currently happening within the small teams of units and offices, staff concerns still manage to reach the management. In hindsight, it would be ideal to have top-down agile communication practices, but **the importance of these bottom-up practices cannot be discounted because although systems in organizations cannot be altered overnight, one interaction at a time brings people closer to the lifeworld.**

With this, **it can be theorized that it is through agile communication prompted by the organization's dialogic interaction and sensemaking nature that they are able to address the complexes present in their environment. The communication-centric conceptualization of agile communication contributes to the moralization of the staff's lifeworld. It serves as the counterbalance between systems and lifeworld, as the lifeworld undergoes colonization by the system. With its dialogical characteristics, agile communication acts as a neutralizer between these systems and the lifeworld. By introducing a new line of inquiry, delving into the use of language pragmatics (i.e., speech acts and truth claims) to analyze phenomenological data, this approach validated both the textural and structural data related to the central phenomenon. Truth claims are employed to rationalize discourse within the inquiry. At the same time, speech acts shed light on how language users, both hearers and speakers, understand and convey information, reflecting the actions performed by their uttered expressions. Together, these aspects facilitate mutual understanding.**

**Results also showed that agile communication does not solely depend on the use of digital technologies (or virtual communication). Instead, it leans more on the authentic relationships, interactions, and interventions of individuals communicating effectively. Through agile communication, they are able to get messages across quickly and efficiently, allowing them to function effectively, balancing their lifeworld and the systems. This can be seen and observed in how they operate and deal with their day-to-day interactions, which continue to be produced and reproduced through their dialogical activities.**

## **Implications**

### **Understanding Agile Communication as a Communication Phenomenon**

The staff members' contextual descriptions of agile communication, emphasizing its flexibility, stakeholder focus, collaboration, and responsiveness to change, deepen our understanding of agile communication as a nuanced phenomenon. By exploring these lived experiences, the study uncovers the meaning behind the action and contextualization of agile communication within an international educational organization. This understanding is crucial for developing theoretical frameworks and practical insights that can enhance communication strategies within organizations. Finally, the study contributes to establishing the communicative function of agile communication within an organizational context, emphasizing a more communication-focused knowledge base.

### **Advancing Knowledge in Organizational Communication**

The findings contribute substantially to the academic literature on organizational communication by providing rich insights into the dynamic and evolving nature of communication practices, especially in local settings. Particularly in the context of organizational change and crises, the study sheds light on the role of communication in navigating challenges within personal and organizational lives, the importance of fostering collaboration, and adapting to new modes of work, especially in virtual spaces. This knowledge is valuable for both scholars and practitioners seeking to stay abreast of contemporary organizational communication dynamics.

## **Enhancing Communication Strategies in Organizations**

Practically, the study's findings offer actionable insights for organizations aiming to improve their communication strategies. Understanding how staff members contextualize and utilize agile communication provides a practical guide for effective communication practices that promote flexibility, collaboration, and innovation, which are also instrumental in maintaining the staff's lifeworld. This can serve as valuable guidance for organizations responding to changing environments and emerging challenges, aligning their communication approaches with the dynamic nature of the work and life landscapes.

## **Informing Organizational Adaptation and Resilience**

In times of crises and uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the study's insights into agile communication play a vital role in facilitating effective communication in maintaining personal and organizational continuity. The findings contribute to understanding how organizations and people (within organizations) navigated communication challenges during crises, adapted their practices, and ensured effective communication, collaboration, and employee well-being. These insights become particularly relevant for organizations aiming to enhance their adaptive capacity and resilience in the face of uncertainties.

## **Promoting Inclusivity and Reducing Inequalities in Digital Transformation**

Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), the study addresses the communication adaptation strategies employed by staff in an international educational organization during the pandemic. By exploring how agile communication strategies

were utilized, the study aims to provide insights into reducing disparities and bridging the digital divide. This contributes to promoting inclusivity and ensuring that disadvantaged groups are not left behind in the digital transformation of education and work, aligning with broader societal goals, which include people's social and family lives.

The study's implications extend beyond the immediate context, recognizing the importance of competent staff members in delivering innovative and technology-oriented learning services. The data gathered not only reflects changes in virtual communication but also provides valuable insights into agile communication practices and contextualization. These results contribute to the academic literature on agile communication in an organizational context, offer insights into the impact of crises on personal life and professional development. It also exemplifies the application of phenomenological research in organizational studies. Furthermore, the findings provide a foundation for future research, allowing other researchers to build upon the insights to deepen our understanding of agile communication and its effects on organizations and their workforce.

### **Recommendations**

Acknowledging the study's limitations is a crucial aspect of ensuring transparency and credibility. While the findings are rich and insightful, their generalizability beyond the specific organizational context is limited. Potential biases in data collection and interpretation may influence outcomes, and the inductive approach employed may constrain the study's scope. Recognizing these limitations

underscores the need for further research and encourages contextual considerations for agile communication across diverse organizational settings.

With that, multidimensional recommendations are presented aiming to address the continually evolving dynamics in the field of agile communication, suggesting a need for further exploration in understanding this multifaceted phenomenon:

### **Theoretical Dimension**

In the theoretical realm, the study extends an invitation to researchers to delve deeper into the conceptual foundations of agile communication. An opportunity arises to refine and expand existing theoretical frameworks, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the underlying principles and mechanisms governing agile communication within organizational settings. This may encompass an exploration of philosophical underpinnings, the fine-tuning of definitions, and the development of conceptual models capable of capturing the intricacies inherent in the dynamics of agile communication.

### **Methodological Dimension**

Methodologically, the study advocates for a more comprehensive exploration of agile communication practices. Researchers are encouraged to further refine and innovate qualitative research methods, ensuring they are adept at capturing the dynamic and context-dependent nature of agile communication. This could entail the development of new interview protocols, observational methodologies, or the integration of mixed-method approaches to provide a more holistic understanding. Additionally, the implementation of longitudinal studies holds promise in offering insights into the

evolution of agile communication practices over time, thus introducing a temporal dimension to the current snapshot.

### **Practical Dimension**

In terms of practical implications, the study encourages both researchers and practitioners to focus on the pragmatic applications of agile communication within organizations. Future research endeavors might explore the development of practical guidelines, toolkits, or training programs aimed at enabling organizations to foster and sustain agile communication practices. A nuanced understanding of the practical challenges and success factors involved in implementing agile communication strategies could serve to inform organizational leaders and communication professionals, aiding them in navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing work environment.

### **Collective Learning in the Context of Agile Communication**

One noteworthy advocacy arising from the study is the exploration of collective learning within the context of agile communication. Recognizing the evolving nature of communication practices in dynamic organizational environments, there is a compelling need to understand how organizations collectively learn and adapt their communication strategies. This involves studying how teams share and integrate knowledge about effective communication, learn from both successes and failures, and collectively evolve their communication practices in response to changing circumstances, which affect the staff's personal and organizational lives. In a study by Galešić et al. (2023), a framework for studying collective adaptation was proposed, which involves understanding how organizations change their strategies and network

structures in response to the evolving circumstances, underscoring the significance of shared learning in enhancing the agility and adaptability of communication practices within organizations. This avenue of research holds the potential to uncover collective intelligence within organizations, offering valuable insights into how shared learning contributes to the agility and adaptability of communication practices.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Request Letter to the Center Director of the Study Site

08 September 2023

#### THE CENTER DIRECTOR

Dear Ma'am;

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am Monalice Aguilar taking a Doctor of Communication at the University of the Philippines Open University and is currently working on my doctoral dissertation. I have consulted several topics for my dissertation proposal to my Advisory Committee Chair since May 2023. After a panel presentation in July 2023, my topic and research framework were approved by the committee with a few revisions on the methodology. They also gave me a go signal to start the data gathering. The proposed title of my paper is "*Agile Communication in An International Educational Organization: A Phenomenological Study.*"

The general meaning of agile communication is limited to reducing steps required to get the message or information across. Understanding the staff experiences of agile communication based on our specific focus areas can be a pioneering effort to contextualize the concept of agile communication. These experiences can lead to the discovery of a better understanding of the central phenomenon. The lived experiences of the staff members would provide valuable insights into their evolving communicative practices, shed light on their innovative approaches, and uncover the ways in which agile communication has attributed meaning within the organizational context.

I am writing to humbly seek your permission if I may be allowed to conduct a Phenomenological Interview (PI) of some staff, at least two from different Offices, about the changes and evolution in their communicative practices and experiences, especially during the pandemic.

To uphold the principles of data privacy and ethical considerations, I assure you that pseudonyms will be employed in my paper, and no specific names or organizations will be disclosed. Your approval and permission would be of great help to the progress of my research, and I wish to emphasize that all information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and employed solely for academic purposes.

I am hoping for your kind consideration. Thank you very much, and God bless.

Respectfully,

Monalice G. Aguilar  
Researcher

## APPENDIX B

### Letter to the Participants

**12 October 2023**

Dear Sir/ Madam:

I am Monalice Aguilar, a Doctor of Communication student under the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies (FICS) at the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU). I am currently working on a dissertation paper about agile communication in partial fulfillment of the said course. The proposed title of my paper is *“Agile Communication in An International Educational Organization: A Phenomenological Study.”*

Agile Communication is a concept that plays a crucial role in adjusting communication strategies within organizations. However, the current definitions of Agile Communication tend to focus more on the organizational context rather than the communication context of the concept (Ruler, 2019). This limited perspective poses a challenge as it fails to provide a profound understanding of Agile Communication as a communication phenomenon.

I believe that your lived experiences would provide valuable insights into the organization’s evolving communicative practices, shed light on innovative approaches, and uncover the ways in which agile communication has attributed meaning within the organizational context.

With this, I am respectfully seeking your consent to be part of a Phenomenological Interview. The interview will focus on understanding the staff experiences of agile communication based on your specific focus areas, which can be a pioneering effort to contextualize the concept of agile communication. Your experiences can lead to the discovery of a better understanding of the central phenomenon – agile communication.

To uphold the principles of data privacy and ethical considerations, I assure you that pseudonyms will be employed in my paper, and no specific names will be disclosed. I also wish to emphasize that all information will be treated with utmost confidentiality and employed solely for academic purposes.

Thank you in anticipation of your favorable response.

Respectfully,

Monalice G. Aguilar  
Researcher

Conforme:

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## APPENDIX C

### Guide Questions for Phenomenological Interviewing

1. How do you understand the concept of agility in communication? What does it mean for you? **(Contextualization)**
2. How would you describe your agile communication practices at work? How do these practices change during the remote work arrangement? **(Contextualizing and Apprehending the Phenomenon)**
3. Tell me about your typical day at work. What procedures do you use/employ in performing your tasks as a \_\_\_\_\_ (Unit-Position)? How do these procedures help you in performing your tasks? **(Apprehending the Phenomenon)**
4. How would you describe your (agile) communication practices with your co-employees in performing your tasks, say in a unit project/process, collaboration projects with other Office/Unit, or Centerwide project/activity? **(Apprehending the Phenomenon)**
5. Describe how the team communication would change, if any when a leader or boss is present. **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**
6. From your experience, describe how team communication changed/adjusted, say, during the remote work arrangement. **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**
7. What communicative behaviors do you exhibit when faced with hurdles or hiccups in the planning and/or implementing of a project/program? **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**
8. In your work, what methods and tools (e.g., design thinking, futures thinking, etc.) or technologies (e.g., digital collaboration tools and knowledge management platforms) do you use? When did you start utilizing them (e.g., pre-pandemic, pandemic)? **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**
9. How do the organizational culture and values resonate with how you communicate with your co-workers? **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**
10. In your experience, what other activities or strategies do you engage in that are related to agile communication? **(Clarifying the Phenomenon)**

### **Follow-up Questions: Ask as necessary**

1. Can you recall a specific instance when you needed to adapt or modify your communication with co-workers? What adjustments did you make in your communication style or approach, and what was the experience like, including any tangible benefits you observed?
2. What, in your opinion, triggered the need for new ways of working like "Agile Communication" in your context? Can you identify any specific events or factors that necessitated this shift and how did this affect you personally?
3. Have you personally altered your communication methods to align with the changing environment? Could you describe the process and the impact of this adjustment on your interactions with co-workers?
4. Were there any notable challenges or obstacles in adopting "Agile Communication" practices within your team or organization? Could you provide more details about these challenges and how they were addressed?
5. "Agile Communication" often involves streamlining processes. Have you ever bypassed or simplified certain steps in your communication to achieve quicker and more efficient outcomes? Could you share an example and describe your experience in adapting your communication for increased agility?

## APPENDIX D

### Data Coding: Textural Descriptions

Participant	Relevant Expressions (Textural Language)	Classification of Speech Acts	Truth Claims	Theme Clusters (Codes)
PI-ERI-ER	<p><i>"Agile communication is being flexible and able to respond quickly or adapt to evolving circumstances at work. It involves creating communication strategies or approaches that are innovative and responsive, with the least negative impacts as much as possible.</i></p> <p><i>... our project teams should be able to <b>quickly adjust to and address these changing circumstances.</b>"</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Stating	Aesthetic Claim	Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to the changing circumstances
PI-KMN-SM	<p><i>"Agile communication in the context of organizations typically refers to <b>the ability of an organization to adapt and flexibility to respond to changing circumstances, customer needs, and market conditions quickly and effectively.</b>"</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing	Aesthetic Claim	
PI-KMN-IM	<p><i>"Agile communication in an organizational context refers to the ability of an organization or in the case of [an innovation and technology international educational organization], <b>to quickly and efficiently adapt to changes in the internal and external environment.</b>"</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Suggesting	Normative Claim	
PI-LDM-LI	<p><i>"...my agile communication practices at work are centered on <b>adaptability</b>, transparency, and maintaining a strong connection with both instructors and students."</i></p>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Cognitive Claim	
PI-FAM-FM	<p><i>"Agile communication means being <b>adaptable to a shifting work environment and increasing your ability to manage changes.</b>"</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Aesthetic Claim	

<b>PI-FAM-HR</b>	<i>"For me, agile communication means being able to adapt your communication to changing circumstances while keeping the project/task on track."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Informing	Cognitive Claim	Ability to adapt communication to changing environment
<b>PI-ERI-EI</b>	<i>"Personally, I see agile communication as a user-centered approach to delivering value to stakeholders at the quickest time possible."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES:	Ethical Claim	User-centered centric to delivering value to stakeholders
<b>PI-KMN-IM</b>	<i>"...the capacity to respond rapidly to evolving stakeholder needs, market changes and demands, advancements in technologies and related infrastructures, including unforeseen challenges. In packaging the knowledge product, target audiences are top of mind."</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Cognitive Claim	
<b>PI-ERI-ER</b>	<i>"In our context, we do recognize that the implementation of R&amp;D projects – both the design and timeline – is often fluid.  Agile communication requires innovation which evolve as we go through the implementation process, while the timeline is almost always dependent on the needs of the key stakeholders."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing  DIRECTIVES: Requiring	Normative Claim	Knowing the stakeholders needs
<b>PI-ERI-ER</b>	<i>"...the receiver of the information is very important. Well the message intent, too, but hindi pwede na kung ano gusto mo sabihin, you just say it. (You can't just say, what you want to say). Because in that case, hindi sya tatagos. (Because in the case the message won't get through. It's not you say eh, it's how you say it. So, we should know who we are communicating with and what are their needs."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Stating	Ethical Claim	
<b>PI-KMN-IM</b>	<i>"I do believe that communication approaches vary per individual or group of individuals. I practice it every day. One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library. I conducted a multi-level</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Aesthetic Claim	

	<p><i>consultation and needs analysis (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts).</i></p> <p><i>I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned. The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted."</i></p>	COMMISSIVES: Committing		
PI-LDM-LI	<p><i>"As a program manager, embracing the concept of agile communication within the organization is fundamental to navigating the dynamic landscape of project management. Agile communication, in this context, entails fostering adaptability, flexibility, and a collaborative communication approach to work. It involves a departure from rigid, upfront planning towards iterative planning and continuous adjustments based on ongoing feedback and changing project needs."</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Normative Claim	Iteration and collaboration
PI-ERI-EI	<p><i>"...agile communication is not an all-or-nothing kind of approach. The context in which one finds themselves in would ultimately dictate what principles can be made actionable to improve one's work. In my case, it is the iterative communication process that we can incorporate in our work. In fact, it is built into our project management system."</i></p>	REPRESENTATIVES: Objecting Asserting	Cognitive Claim	
PI-ERI-ER	<p><i>"Agile communication requires innovation designs, which evolve as we go through the implementation process, while the timeline is almost always dependent on the key stakeholders."</i></p>	DIRECTIVES: Requiring	Ethical Claim	
PI-ERI-EI	<p><i>"In our context, we do recognize that the implementation of R&amp;D projects – both the design and timeline – is often fluid."</i></p>	EXPRESSIVES: Affirming	Normative Claim	Innovative and evolving process

	<i>Agile communication requires innovation which evolve as we go through the implementation process, while the timeline is almost always dependent on the needs of the key stakeholders."</i>	DIRECTIVES: Requiring		
PI-KMN-SM	<i>"Agile communication practices in a work environment are essential for promoting collaboration, transparency, and efficiency at work. These practices are particularly crucial in project management and team collaboration."</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Normative Claim	Efficient work environment
PI-KMN-IM	<i>"...these [agile communication] practices are essential in fostering collaborative and efficient work environment. Such promote effective communication, transparency, and adaptability within teams, facilitating the timely exchange of information and the quick resolution of issues."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Normative Claim	
PI-KMN-EM	<i>"In terms of project management, agile communication means simple, direct and face-to-face communications or conversations and passing on instructions."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Cognitive Claim	Simple, direct and face-to-face communication
PI-FAM-FM	<i>"...but agile communication is more practiced if there is a face-to-face interaction."</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Aesthetic Claim	
PI-ERI-ER	<i>"... [agile] communication is more instantaneous and seems to be more intimate (relatable) during face-to-face work arrangements. During face-to-face work arrangements, we can easily go to each other's workstations and get immediate feedback."</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Ethical Claim	
PI-ERI-ER	<i>"Communication systems among team/unit members have always been open and transparent. Relevant project information, updates, and concerns, including feedback, are shared among team members at any point during the project implementation so necessary adjustments can be made."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Stating	Normative Claim	Transparency in communicating

<b>PI-LDM-LM</b>	<i>"Our organization is relatively small—everyone knows everyone and there is a certain level of comfort and familiarity. The relationships and dynamics <b>enable us to communicate with each other freely and casually, even in a work context.</b> These informal communications are later documented more formally (like email or memo)."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Stating	Ethical Claim	
<b>PI-KMN-IM</b>	<i>"In our organization, <b>agile communication</b> practices are essential in fostering collaborative and efficient work environment. <b>Such promote effective communication, transparency, and adaptability within teams, facilitating the timely exchange of information and the quick resolution of issues.</b>"</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Informing	Normative Claim	
<b>PI-LDM-LI</b>	<i>"... a collaborative communication approach to work. It involves a departure from rigid, upfront planning towards iterative planning and continuous adjustments <b>based on ongoing feedback and changing project needs.</b>"</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Cognitive Claim	Feedback loops
<b>PI-KMN-KR</b>	<i>"Agile communication focuses on rapid cycles on product <b>development and improvement through regular end user feedback.</b>"</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Informing	Cognitive Claim	
<b>PI-KMN-IM</b>	<i>"<b>Regular feedback is crucial in agile communication, but inconsistent or delayed feedback loops can hinder the ability to adapt quickly and make informed decisions.</b>"</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Aesthetic Claim	
<b>PI-LDM-LM</b>	<i>"...It is <b>more than a management principle, but rather a culture that is seen in people's behaviors, in leadership style, and in the processes and policies of the organization.</b> An agile culture in terms of communicating, <b>encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and autonomous.</b>"</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring Suggesting	Ethical Claim	More than a management principle

PI-ERI-ER	<i>"Agile communication encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and <b>autonomous</b>."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Suggesting	Cognitive Claim	
PI-LDM-LM	<i>"An organization practicing agile communication is <b>characterized by its flexibility, resilience, and ability to pivot strategies, structures, and processes swiftly and effectively</b>."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing	Normative Claim	Ability to pivot strategies, structures and processes
PI-ERI-EI	<i>"...agile communication is not an all-or-nothing kind of approach. The context in which one finds themselves in would ultimately dictate what principles can be made actionable to improve one's work. In my case, it is the iterative communication process that we can incorporate in our work. <b>In fact, it is built into our project management system</b>."</i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Cognitive Claim	Embedded in Project management practice
PI-LQM-LP	<i>"From the word term itself, "agile communication," it is how organizations communicate to respond to changes, especially sudden ones, <b>without compromising the quality of work</b>."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting	Normative Claim	Responding to change without compromising the quality of work
PI-ERI-ER	<i>"... It involves <b>creating communication strategies or approaches</b> that are innovative and responsive, <b>with the least negative impacts as much as possible</b>."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing	Ethical Claim	
PI-FAM-HR	<i>"For me, agile communication means being able to adapt your communication to changing circumstances while <b>keeping the project/task on track</b>."</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Informing	Cognitive Claim	Timely delivery of project

## APPENDIX E

### Data Coding: Structural Descriptions

Theme Clusters: Textural Descriptions	Number of Practices	Relevant Expressions (Example Practice)	Classification of Speech Acts	Truth Claims	Theme Clusters (Codes)
<i>Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/rapidly to the changing circumstances</i>	<b>8</b>	<i>“During the pandemic, we are on work-from-home set-up. <b>One of agile communication practices we did in our unit is texting or messaging our colleague before making a call. Parang advance notice that, hey, I will be calling you at this time.</b> So, the other person will be able to adjust his/her schedule.”</i> [PI-ERI-EU]	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Normative Claim	<b>Proactive communication</b>
	<b>4</b>	<i>“When a new team member or technical support staff is onboarded, I adapt my communication style to ease them into the team or the project. <b>I try to be proactive through verbal and written communication.</b> Because they are new and don’t have much background about the Center or our projects, <b>I try to be careful and avoid info-dumping or info-overloading the new team members.</b> I communicate action points with the proper information that they need, for example what task to do, who to talk to, where to get forms/files, etc. <b>Verbal communication allows them to ask questions or clarify points while written communication provides a note that they can refer to later.</b>”</i> [PI-LDM-LM]	EXPRESSIVES: Welcoming	Ethical Claim	

	5	<p><i>"During the pandemic, we launched two online courses. <b>The usual practice in our office was to write formal letters of invitation to the ministries of education in other countries to recruit participants.</b> Because of bureaucracy, communication takes several weeks. <b>When we launched the two new courses, we still sent the formal letters but we also made a parallel effort by posting a Call for Participants on our social media.</b></i></p> <p><i><b>This proved to be effective because in just a matter of days, we received thousands of interested applicants."</b></i> [PI-LDM-LM]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing</p> <p>DECLARATIONS: Declaring</p>	<p>Ethical Claim</p> <p>Cognitive Claim</p>	<p><b>Use of social media and messaging applications</b></p>
	9	<p><i>"During our remote work arrangement, it became a practice to communicate mostly through social media and messaging apps (mostly Messenger, some Viber or Telegram). Several group chats were created: office-wide, unit-wide, then specific projects. <b>In my observation, the biggest change in communication was the fact that it became constant.</b>"</i> [PI-LDM-LI]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Stating</p>	<p>Aesthetic Claim</p>	
	6	<p><i>"Our face-to-face scrum meetings were done using video conferencing platforms during the pandemic. This allowed us to quickly regroup to discuss solutions despite the limitations of meeting in person during those times."</i> [PI-ERI-ER]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing</p>	<p>Aesthetic Claim</p>	<p><b>Use of video conferencing platforms in order arrive at a decision</b></p>

Ability to adapt communication to changing environment	3	<p><b>“One example of how I changed my communication style during the pandemic is writing email in bullet points or giving concise updates. Because a lot of work was being done through a computer, I figured that doing this could significantly improve how fast my teammates could process information coming from me. A tangible benefit could be improved understanding.”</b></p> <p>[PI-ERI-ER]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting</p>	Cognitive Claim	<b>Succinct and vivid message construction</b>
	7	<p><b>“As part of the finance team, we apply an innovative approach in our agile communication practices by utilizing technology to maintain our level of service despite the changes in work arrangements. Face-to-face meetings were replaced with virtual meetings, and our daily tasks were managed by remote access to our financial system.”</b> [PI-FAM-FM]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing</p>	Normative Claim	<b>Utilization of technology</b>
User-centric to delivering value to stakeholders	4	<p><b>“...during the work-from-home arrangement, instead of emailing provincial coordinators, which we usually do pre-pandemic, we message them using messaging apps. They prefer it, compared to email. We get hold of them faster. Mas mabilis ang reply.”</b></p> <p>[PI-ERI-EU]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting</p>	Ethical Claim	<b>Valuing the Stakeholders’ Communication Channel Preference</b>
Knowing the stakeholders needs	5	<p><b>Very important yung receiver ng message in agile communication. Na first and foremost is the (intent of the) message pero depende how you deliver. It’s not what you say. It’s how you say it.</b></p>	<p>DECLARATIONS: Declaring</p>	<p>Normative Claim</p> <p>Ethical Claim</p>	<b>Communicating using the end-users’ language</b>

		<i>Like in packaging our knowledge solutions and products. We should be able to use the language of our target audience. Lalo sa mga research outputs natin. Makakapal and mahabang study. <b>So what we do, we develop standalone modules. Mas maappreciate ng end-user yun, say ng parents or the teachers. Direct to the point kapag pinackage mo siya. Hindi yung parang maraming palabok na napaka haba nating mga research report diba? Very technical pa ang language.</b></i> [PI-ERI-ER]	REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting		
	3	<i>“Aside from the pandemic, another factor is the changing needs/wants/priorities of our clients, which in our case are educators. In recent years, <b>we noticed that teachers and school heads who join our programs are relatively younger (principals in their 30s, teachers who are fresh grads).</b> We have to modify our approach to this young audience. For example, it’s easier and faster to reach them through social media rather than through formal letters coursed through their divisions or schools.</i>  <i><b>Our language also had to change—less formal and more conversational.</b></i> ” [PI-LDM-LM]	COMMISSIVES: Accepting  REPRESENTATIVES: Stating	Normative Claim	
	4	<i>One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library due to many changes happening. <b>I conducted a multi-level consultation</b></i>	DECLARATIONS: Declaring	Normative Claim	<b>Conduct of needs assessment and consultation</b>

		<p><b>and needs analysis</b> (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts).</p> <p><b>I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned.</b> The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted." [PI-KMN-IM]</p>	<p>COMMISSIVES: Committing</p>		
Iteration and collaboration	3	<p>"As the technological infrastructure backbone of the organization, <b>we also work hand in hand with different offices to automate their processes. We co-design these with the respective units. We conduct needs assessment, what are the requirements based on their operations manual. We align the programming of the system based on their existing process and suggests improvements when necessary. Each online system programming undergo a pilot and parallel testing, That guides us what else to improve.</b></p> <p>Requests are now online. So approvals can be made even if the people involved are not present in the office." [PI-KMN-SM]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Asserting Stating</p>	Normative Claim	<p><b>Co-designing of online systems and processes</b></p>
	4	<p>"<b>Collaboration tools and project management platforms, each with their own established procedures, facilitate seamless coordination and progress tracking within the team. It guides</b></p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Stating</p>	Cognitive Claim	<p><b>Use of collaboration tools facilitating seamless coordination</b></p>

		<i>us to manage and make necessary iterations if needed.” [PI-LDM-LI]</i>			
<i>Innovative and evolving process</i>	<b>6</b>	<p><b>“In the context of our ISO Certification, the processes [operation manuals] nakakahelp sya. In terms of agile communication, kasi it’s up to us who we define yung process di ba?</b></p> <p><b>So, we can adjust the process kasi tayo ang owner and we would know what works best. It’s how should we define our process in such a way it’s agile. Like, yeah, may proseso ka, may standards ka, there should be agility in it. Hindi naka kahon, how can we make the process na hindi rigid. Duon papasok ang agile communication. Like knowing when to adjust a process immediately kasi it’s not working or there are provisions or policies na hindi na touch sa process.</b></p> <p><b>Also, before finalizing the revisions in the OMs we present it to the members of the staff through HReXCHANGE. That way, collaborative sya.” [PI-ERI-ER]</b></p>	<p><b>DECLARATIONS:</b> Confirming</p> <p><b>COMMISSIVES:</b> Committing</p> <p><b>REPRESENTATIVES:</b> Stating Affirming</p>	<p>Normative Claim</p> <p>Ethical Claim</p>	<b>Practical implementation of processes and knowledge products towards improvement</b>
	<b>5</b>	<p><b>“Ang ginagawa is naglalabas ng draft or for pilot test version. Pilot test version so naging importante yung versions.</b></p> <p><b>Nagagamit na sya ng end-user. May historical artifacts ka na how the material evolved, coming from the version. Parang sa mobile phones operating systems, di ba kaya nga may versions?It also applies to our knowledge products using the</b></p>	<p><b>REPRESENTATIVES:</b> Describing</p> <p>Affirming</p>	Cognitive Claim	

		<i>different version, na okay, it came from this version but now ito na yung latest version nya.</i> [PI-ERI-ER]			
<i>Efficient work environment</i>	<b>8</b>	<i>“When engaged in collaboration projects with other offices or units, effective agile communication practices extend to understanding the unique perspectives and expertise each team brings to the table. It improves team relationships. We do regular status updates, joint brainstorming sessions, and cross-functional team meetings foster collaboration and ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding project objectives and deliverables.”</i> [PI-KMN-IM]	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing	Ethical Claim	<b>Understanding unique perspectives and expertise</b>
<i>Simple, direct and face-to-face communication</i>	<b>6</b>	<i>“For example, the process of issuance of travel insurance. The service provider will process the request if we submit the duly accomplish forms and copy of ID of the persons to be insured. Sometimes we need to alter our communications to be able to deliver the task because most of the requests are urgent.</i>  <i>Dito pumapasok na makikiusap ka directly sa agent para lang ma-process ang insurance at minsan kailangan mangulit para sa follow ups ng forms. We set meetings with them. That also eliminates bureaucracy.”</i> [PI-FAM-HR]	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Stating  DIRECTIVES: Asking	Normative Claim  Aesthetic Claim	<b>Veering away from the bureaucratic process</b>
	<b>9</b>	<i>“...when you request a service from another unit/department, you would usually approach the person first to give them a heads up, ask about</i>	DIRECTIVES: Asking	Normative Claim	<b>Open and flat communication</b>

		<i>their schedule and workload, etc., before formalizing your request through email, memo, or intranet job requests.” [PI-LDM-LM]</i>			
Transparency in communicating	6	<p><i>“Communication systems among team/unit members have always been open and transparent. Relevant project information, updates, and concerns, including feedback, are shared among team members at any point during the project implementation so necessary adjustments can be made.</i></p> <p><i>These practices are in place whether during face-to-face (e.g., during informal talks along the hallways, coffee or lunch break, we just go to each other’s workstations) or remote work arrangements (e.g., emails, texts, audio/video calls).” [PI-KMN-IM]</i></p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Informing</p>	Aesthetic Claim	Disclosure of all relevant information
Feedback loops	7	<p><i>“...instead of emailing a colleague and we are both present in the office, I would usually go to his office. Ilan minutes lang naman papunta sa kanya. Direct and mabilis and feedback. Instead of emailing then mag-aantay pa ako ng sagot. Consistent din ang feedback especially pag face-to-face interaction. [PI-KMN-KR]</i></p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Asserting</p>	Cognitive Claim	Quick and consistent feedbacking
	6	<p><i>“During remote work arrangements, I also recognize the importance of regular feedback loops. This includes soliciting feedback from both instructors and students through surveys, virtual meetings, and other channels. This iterative feedback process allows for continuous</i></p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Stating</p>	Normative Claim	

		<i>improvement in communication practices and helps address any emerging challenges promptly.</i> [PI-LDM-LI]			
	<b>5</b>	<i>“During our remote work arrangement, it became a practice to communicate mostly through social media and messaging apps (mostly Messenger, some Viber or Telegram). Several group chats were created: office-wide, unit-wide, then specific projects. In my observation, the biggest change in communication was the fact that it became constant.”</i> [PI-LDM-LM]	REPRESENTATIVES: Describing Stating	Cognitive Claim	
<i>More than a management principle</i>	<b>5</b>	<i>“...we are relatively small but we have big projects, big and sometimes simultaneous projects. Bureaucracy is a tendency in any organization. Napaalam mo na ba ‘yan sa boss ganyan ganyan. Ang daming layers diba? So, what we do meron tayo prior pasabi or nag cocommunicate na tayo... Bago pa nila gawin yung usual process especially us center. ISO Certified tayo, dalawa pang certification. We have conscious effort, hindi na kailangan pang sabihan. We work under minimal supervision.”</i> [PI-KMN-EM]	REPRESENTATIVES: Stating Asserting	Cognitive Claim	<b>Working under minimal supervision</b>
	<b>3</b>	<i>“Agile communication encourages individuals to be creative, experimental, and autonomous. Staff are not afraid of mistakes. They think outside-the-box. Pero di naman yung significant mistake na</i>	REPRESENTATIVES: Suggesting Asserting	Normative Claim	<b>Thinking outside the box</b>

		<i>ikakasira ng center. It's more of calculated risks. <b>Kasama na din duon yung intellectual humility ng staff na they know that mistakes are also part of the learning process.</b></i> [PI-ERI-ER]			
<i>Embedded in project management practice</i>	<b>4</b>	<p><i>"...we frequently deal with rush and urgent transactions. It shows our versatility in terms of how we deliver our work.</i></p> <p><b>Nevertheless, we continue to operate projects within the framework of the procedures [project implementation plans, OMs] we have in place.</b> As a Senior Associate, they are counting on me to check, verify, and process documents given that my particular work has a cascading effect on others, time management is also crucial to us." [PI-FAM-FM]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Stating</p> <p>COMMISSIVES: Accepting</p>	Normative Claim	<b>Operate projects within the framework</b>
<i>Ability to pivot strategies, structures and processes</i>	<b>5</b>	<p><b>"In the context of our ISO Certification,</b> the processes [operation manuals] nakakahelp sya. In terms of agile communication, kasi it's up to us who we define yung process di ba?</p> <p><b>So, we can adjust the process kasi tayo ang owner and we would know what works best. It's how should we define our process in such a way it's agile.</b> Like, yeah, may proseso ka, may standards ka, there should be agility in it. Hindi naka kahon, how can we make the process na hindi rigid. Duon papasok ang agile communication. Like knowing when to adjust a process immediately kasi it's not working or</p>	<p>DECLARATIONS: Confirming</p> <p>COMMISSIVES: Committing</p>	Normative Claim	<b>Adjusting the processes to avoid working in silos</b>

		<p>there are provisions or policies na hindi na touch sa process.</p> <p>Also, <b>before finalizing the revisions in the OMs we present it to the members of the staff through HReXCHANGE.</b> That way, collaborative sya.” [PI-ERI-ER]</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Stating Affirming</p>	<p>Ethical Claim</p>	
<p>Responding to change without compromising the quality of work</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>One instance I can recall is in planning for the retrofit of our Knowledge Resource Center or library due to many changes happening. <b>I conducted a multi-level consultation and needs analysis</b> (from the support to programs offices, to the support staff and management posts).</p> <p><b>I have to customize the presentation, the tone and message to clearly send the message or the ultimate goal of the project to various groups mentioned.</b> The project was able to secure support from all stakeholders that were consulted.” [PI-KMN-IM]</p>	<p>DECLARATIONS: Declaring</p> <p>COMMISSIVES: Committing</p>	<p>Normative Claim</p>	<p><b>Staying focused and objective</b></p>
<p>Timely delivery of project</p>		<p><b>“I can say that part of our agility in communicating is that we operate on an open, consultative communication lines. We do not have stringent layers whenever we want to get to communicate to a colleague or a superior. We used various platforms to communicate (such as Facebook Messenger, Viber, Telegram, Email, Watercooler Wednesdays etc.) and whenever there is an important task to do—the team pull everyone’s strength to</b></p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES: Describing</p>	<p>Normative Claim</p>	<p><b>Finding ways to deliver commitments</b></p>

		<b><i>contribute and ensure the timely and quality completion of the work.</i></b> [PI-LDM-LM]			
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## APPENDIX F

### Data Coding: Essential Theme

Theme Clusters: Textural Descriptions	Theme Clusters: Structural Description	Essential Themes	
Flexibility to adapt and respond quickly/ rapidly to the changing circumstances	<i>Proactive communication</i>	<b>Flexible and Adaptive Communication in Managing Changes</b>	
	<i>Use of social media and messaging applications</i>		
	<i>Use of video conferencing platforms in order arrive at a decision</i>		
Ability to adapt communication to changing environment	<i>Succinct and vivid message construction</i>		
	<i>Utilization of technology</i>		
User-centric to delivering value to stakeholders	<i>Valuing the Stakeholders' Communication Channel Preference</i>		<b>Stakeholder Centered</b>
Knowing the stakeholders needs	<i>Communicating using the end-users' language</i>		
	<i>Conduct of needs assessment and consultation</i>		
Iteration and collaboration	<i>Co-designing of online systems and processes</i>	<b>Collaborative, Innovative and Iterative Process Promoting Efficient Work Environment</b>	
	<i>Use of collaboration tools facilitating seamless coordination</i>		
Innovative and evolving process	<i>Practical implementation of processes and knowledge products towards improvement</i>		
Efficient work environment	<i>Understanding unique perspectives and expertise</i>		
Simple, direct and face-to-face communication	<i>Veering away from the bureaucratic process</i>		<b>Direct and Transparent Interpersonal Communication</b>
	<i>Open and flat communication</i>		
Transparency in communicating	<i>Disclosure of all relevant information</i>		
Feedback loops	<i>Quick and consistent feedbacking</i>		
More than a management principle	<i>Working under minimal supervision</i>	<b>Embedded in Organizational Culture and Processes</b>	
	<i>Thinking outside the box</i>		

Embedded in project management practice	<i>Operate projects within the framework</i>	
Ability to pivot strategies, structures and processes	<i>Adjusting the processes to avoid working in silos</i>	
Responding to change without compromising the quality of work	<i>Staying focused and objective</i>	<b>Maintaining Quality Work Outputs (Performance)</b>
Timely delivery of project	<i>Finding ways to deliver commitments</i>	