


Organizational communication in higher education institutions: An analysis of benefits and challenges in a systematic literature review

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.002-011>

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the importance of organizational communication in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the face of challenges and uncertainties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The research, based on a systematic review of the literature, aims to identify the benefits and challenges faced by HEIs when adapting to technological changes and the transition to distance learning based on their organizational communication. The results reveal challenges in the face of the need for well-planned strategies and investments in organizational culture as crucial elements for the success of HEIs, the maintenance of effective relationships with their stakeholders for the achievement of academic goals. Among the benefits observed, significant improvements in teaching-learning processes stand out, facilitated by the integration of interactive technologies. In addition, effective organizational communication strengthens institutional culture and fosters strategic relationships among stakeholders. Organizational communication in HEIs results in improvements in teaching-learning processes, in the strengthening of culture, and in increased engagement and knowledge sharing among internal members of the institutions. These findings highlight the importance of organizational communication as a key element for the success and resilience of HEIs in an ever-evolving educational environment.

Keywords: Organizational communication, Higher Education Institutions, COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication plays a key role in the dynamic and challenging environment of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These institutions play a crucial role in training future professionals, disseminating knowledge, and pursuing academic advancement. However, the context in which they operate is characterized by rapid technological evolution, changing stakeholder expectations, and unique challenges (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021). The way HEIs communicate, both internally and with their external audiences, plays a crucial role in their ability to address these challenges and optimize opportunities.

HEIs face complex challenges such as the transition to distance learning, growing digital literacy, the need to engage and retain learners, and the constant balance between maintaining academic traditions and adopting technological innovations (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.* 2021, Milas Z., Milas D., 2021). In addition, HEIs have multiple *stakeholders*, including students, teachers, staff, parents, governments, and the wider community, each with specific expectations and needs regarding communication (Gamboa 2018; Letlatsa 2022). Therefore, it is essential to bridge this theoretical gap in order to more comprehensively understand how organizational communication can be optimized to address these challenges and meet the expectations of diverse audiences

Organizational communication plays a prominent role in HEIs, directly influencing the effectiveness of academic and administrative strategies (Cheney; Christensen, 2000). This article seeks to explore the complexities of communication in HEIs, considering both the benefits and challenges it presents. As the educational landscape undergoes significant transformations, such as the transition to digital teaching and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to understand how organizational communication impacts HEIs.

This research aims to address this theoretical gap and provide a more in-depth analysis of organizational communication in HEIs. Through a systematic review of the literature, it is intended to explore the main challenges and benefits associated with organizational communication in these institutions. Authors such as Kim *et al.* (2021) also address the importance of organizational communication in HEIs and its role in knowledge sharing and innovation.

This research seeks not only to identify areas where existing research is limited, but also to highlight opportunities for future studies that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of organizational communication in HEIs and offer practical guidance to optimize this process. Therefore, this study aims to fill a theoretical gap in the theme such as organizational communication and HEIs, providing valuable *insights* for professionals, researchers and leaders of HEIs who seek to improve the effectiveness of their organizational communication in a scenario of constant transformation.



Therefore, the research presents the following problematization: What are the benefits and challenges faced by HEIs in relation to organizational communication, especially considering the changes in the educational scenario, such as the transition to digital teaching and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?"

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organizational communication is a key element in the success of any organization. It is a crucial element in the organizational context, playing a fundamental role in the dissemination and sharing of knowledge. Research in organizational communication dates back to the pioneering contributions of Lasswell (1936) in the early twentieth century, who established a scientific model of communication based on mathematical and cybernetic principles.

From the 1960s, with the rise of industrialization, communication began to be perceived as a comprehensive phenomenon of study, examining the communication processes within organizations in a global context. This focus has expanded to encompass several areas, including journalism and interaction with audiences and consumers (Kunsch, 2003).

Organizational communication encompasses the processes of exchanging information, ideas, and knowledge within a company, establishing a common understanding among its members and ensuring the achievement of organizational objectives. Among the main elements of organizational communication, the following stand out: internal communication; external communication; leadership and communication; and technology and communication (Cheney; Christensen, 2000).

As elucidated by Cheney and Christensen (2000), internal communication implies an exchange of information between members of the organization, encompassing formal communications, such as memos and policies, as well as informal interactions in the workplace. On the other hand, external communication relates to the way in which the organization communicates with external parties, such as customers, suppliers, investors, and the media, and the company's image and trust can be influenced by effective (or ineffective) external communication.

Effective communication on the part of leaders is essential for aligning goals and values within the organization. Effective leaders are proficient at conveying a clear vision and motivating their teams. In addition, technological advances have transformed the way organizations communicate, with the introduction of tools such as e-mails, videoconferences, and intranets, facilitating fast and efficient communication (Cheney; Christensen, 2000; Cutlip; Center; Broom, 2006).

Organizational communication plays an essential role in the success and collaboration of a company or institution. When conducted effectively, it establishes a network of understanding that



connects all members to the organization's vision and strategic objectives. Such alignment is indispensable to foster synergy, enabling the parties to collaborate harmoniously and drive operational efficiency. One of the main benefits of effective communication is the creation of a healthy work environment, characterized by positive interpersonal relationships, where trust is cultivated and transparency is valued (Robbins; Coulter; Decenzo, 2017).

Trust is a crucial element for the efficient functioning of a team. Through transparent communication, employees feel safer when sharing ideas, concerns, and feedback, strengthening inter-member bonds and enabling leadership to make informed decisions based on the information received. In addition, effective communication fosters mutual respect, evidenced in the way messages are transmitted and received, considering the various perspectives and communicative styles (Robbins; Coulter; Decenzo, 2017).

As highlighted by Robbins, Coulter, and Decenzo (2017), investing in effective communication strategies not only facilitates the achievement of strategic objectives, but also creates an environment in which individual talents are recognized and enhanced. It should also be noted that open and effective communication plays a crucial role in the constructive approach to conflicts, preventing misunderstandings and fostering collaborative solutions. Externally, the way an organization communicates with its audience directly influences its community and image in the market, and transparent and authentic communications are valued by stakeholders (Robbins; Coulter; Decenzo, 2017).

Organizational communication plays an essential role during times of crisis, such as emergencies, controversies, or unexpected challenges, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Transparent and agile responses are crucial for preserving institutional trust. In addition, organizational communication plays a crucial role in the implementation of technological innovations (Terciotti; Macareno, 2013).

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Organizational communication plays a central role in strengthening the institutional identity of HEIs by consistently articulating the institution's mission, vision, and values. As argued by Cardoso (2019), such communication contributes to the construction of a cohesive image, having an impact not only on attracting potential students and partners, but also on consolidating the community's trust in the institution. A solid institutional identity, according to Cardoso (2019), is a key factor for the success of the HEI, directly influencing the ability to attract talent and resources.

Fostering positive experiences for students is facilitated through effective organizational communication. Organizational communication facilitates collaboration between professors, researchers, and different academic departments. Efficiency in transmitting information about



academic activities, research projects, and collaboration opportunities fosters innovation and strengthens trust in the academic institution. In summary, organizational communication plays a multifaceted and fundamental role in HEIs, from strengthening institutional identity to promoting academic collaboration. The benefits of effective communication are crucial for the success and sustainability of the institution in the contemporary educational scenario (Silva; Silva, 2020).

HEIs face the challenge related to the diversity of audiences served, including students, faculty, staff, parents, donors, and the community at large. Each group has specific needs and expectations, making it essential to tailor messages to each audience. The lack of a segmented approach can compromise communication effectiveness (Barbi; Santos, 2006).

Crisis management represents another challenge for HEIs, whether related to academic, administrative or reputational issues. Effective management of communication during these critical moments is essential, as the absence of an adequate strategy can result in significant damage to the trust of the institution and stakeholders. The ever-evolving digital environment, especially on social media platforms, demands that institutions are always up-to-date in order to reach target audiences. Failure to adapt to these changes can result in gaps in communication and missed opportunities for engagement. Faced with the aforementioned challenges, HEIs face a complex task in the management of organizational communication. Overcoming such challenges requires a strategic, adaptive, and engagement-oriented approach, considering the particularities of the academic environment and the diversity of audiences involved. Understanding and addressing these challenges are imperative to ensure that organizational communication in HEIs effectively fulfills its role in promoting institutional success (Barbi; Santos, 2006).

Considering the transformations in the educational scenario, notably the transition to digital teaching and the impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational communication has taken on an increased relevance, playing a preponderant role in modeling and facilitating the adaptation of HEIs to new teaching models and emerging demands. In this context, organizational communication functioned as an instrumental tool in providing clear and up-to-date information about changes in teaching methods, academic schedules, and safety measures. Transparency in communications has proven indispensable to mitigate the anxiety of stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents (Piazzzi; Ehrenberg, 2020).

With the rise of digital education, social media and other online platforms have become crucial channels for HEIs' communication. Virtual engagement strategies, such as live reinforcements, online forums, and social media interactions, have been implemented to maintain connection with students and the academic community. Effective organizational communication on these platforms fosters active participation and a sense of belonging, even in far-flung environments. The performance of organizational communication plays a fundamental role in adapting the



marketing strategies of HEIs to the digital environment, offering online courses, informative webinars and the creation of content relevant to the needs of students as essential strategies (Piazzzi; Ehrenberg, 2020).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach, aiming to deepen the understanding of a specific topic. The research presents the following problematization: What are the benefits and challenges faced by HEIs in relation to organizational communication, especially considering the changes in the educational scenario, such as the transition to digital teaching and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?"

The general objective of this research is to comprehensively analyze the benefits and challenges faced by HEIs in relation to organizational communication. Specifically, it is intended to understand how changes in the educational scenario, such as the transition to digital teaching and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have influenced the dynamics of organizational communication in HEIs. Through a systematic review of the literature, this research aims to identify the main trends, successful practices and obstacles that affect communication in HEIs, offering *insights* that can contribute to the improvement of communication strategies and thus promote educational excellence and organizational effectiveness in HEIs.

In order to meet the general objective and answer the problematization of this research, the following specific objectives of the research were elaborated: i) to carry out a systematic review of the literature to identify and analyze studies related to organizational communication in Higher Education Institutions; ii) systematize the benefits of organizational communication in Higher Education Institutions; iii) systematize the challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions in relation to organizational communication before and after the COVID-19 pandemic; iv) systematize the two themes through the studies found.

To meet the objectives, the methodology employed in this research is based on a systematic review of the literature, as defined by Transfield, Denyer and Smart (2003), whose purpose is to examine the current state of knowledge on a given topic, directing future research within this construct. The systematic literature review involved the search and analysis of keywords, in this case, "organizational communication" and "higher education institutions", which were combined to identify relevant studies. The main objective was to structure academic publications and select specific research topics related to organizational communication in HEIs.

The search for documents related to the theme of organizational communication in HEIs was conducted in widely recognized databases, such as *Scopus*, *Web of Science* and *Science Direct*, which cover a wide variety of articles in the area of management and business. To refine the results, six



sequential filters were applied. The first filter aimed to identify the initial number of studies related to the keywords. The second filter restricted the search to articles published between 2018 and June 2023. The third filter focused on specific areas of knowledge, such as business, management, accounting, and social sciences. The fourth filter organized the articles by specific time periods. The fifth filter involved the evaluation of the titles, abstracts and results of the studies. Finally, the sixth filter consisted of the complete reading of the articles selected for the analysis of the results of the systematic review of the literature, which will be discussed later. The search using the keywords "organizational communication" and "higher education institutions" resulted in a total of 8 articles that were discussed to understand the objective of this research. The exclusion of articles was based on the criterion of journal impact factor as part of the selection process.

Table 01 – Results of the systematic review of the research literature

Database	1st Filter	2nd Filter	3rd Filter	4th Filter	5° Filter	6th Filter
Scopus	256	155	137	105	12	7
Science Direct	0	0	0	0	0	0
Web Of Science	23	12	7	7	4	1
Total Articles Found						8

Source: The authors, 2023.

Chart 01 concisely presents the steps followed in carrying out the systematic review of the literature, which culminated in the organization of the benefits and challenges related to organizational communication in HEIs of this research, which will be presented below.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

SYSTEMATIZATION OF BENEFITS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Organizational communication in HEIs offers a number of significant benefits. According to the study by Gamboa (2018), through the qualitative method by which seven professionals in the field of education and communication from the Universidad Veracruzana Higher Education Institution, in Mexico, were interviewed, the perceptions of teachers about ICTs and other technologies were analyzed, the research revealed that these technological tools facilitate the daily life of teachers in the classroom, promoting innovation and improving teaching-learning processes for students. In addition, these technologies also aid in the effective transmission of communication, contributing to the effectiveness of education.



Segura-Mariño, Paniagua-Rojano, and Piñeiro-Naval (2020) conducted a study to assess the level of communication in 60 HEIs in Ecuador by analyzing their institutional websites. The objective of the research was to evaluate the importance of HEIs in interactive communication through their *institutional websites*. The methodology used in the study was qualitative and quantitative. From the perception of the communication of the HEIs with the *internet* and the Higher Education sector associated with digital media and *the internet*, it was identified that the target audience of these institutions are students who are adept at technologies and see communication in the digital environment more interactive than formalized communication. The research revealed that HEIs that effectively use their *institutional websites* can benefit from the interactivity offered by the *internet*, meeting the expectations of students who are familiar with digital technologies. This more interactive approach to digital communication can be more effective than formalized communication in meeting the needs of the academic community.

The study conducted by Milas Z. and Milas D. (2021) sought to learn about the benefits of communication during the digital transformation of the post-pandemic teaching-learning process, comparing the strategies adopted in the internal communication processes of HEIs in Croatia. In the research, internal communication is defined as a process of communication and exchange of information between members of HEIs such as *stakeholders*, students, professors and student departments, it stimulates integration through dialogue with internal teams, motivates employees to carry out their work with efficiency and motivation. The study reveals several benefits of digital transformation and internal communication in post-pandemic HEIs. One of the positive findings is the increased demand for digital content in distance *learning e-learning*, which makes learning more convenient for students. This translates into hybrid classes and online discussions, providing greater flexibility in the teaching-learning process. In addition, the use of digital tools, such as *e-learning* communication platforms, allows for efficient document storage and more effective communication in education administration. In the organizational communication between internal departments of the HEIs, auxiliary digital tools were used, such as *e-learning* communication platforms for document storage and communication.

The studies by Kim *et al.* (2021) discuss the themes of organizational communication and transformational leadership. This study aims to understand the mediating effect of organizational communication on the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in higher education institutions in South Korea. The study was approached with the application of questionnaires, through a sample of 321 university employees. The study reinforces that all members of HEIs should bring ideas to join efforts to continue helping in the elaboration of changes and strategic adjustments. For this, there is the importance of sharing *know-how* as a collaborative way, which will facilitate organizational communication in developing new strategies. The study



evidenced benefits of the relationship between organizational communication and transformational leadership, highlighting that organizational communication plays a crucial role in increasing engagement and knowledge sharing among members of HEIs. This collaborative sharing of knowledge facilitates organizational communication, resulting in the development of new strategies, transformational leadership provides inspiring insight, and strengthens organizational culture.

The study conducted by Chaudhry *et al.* (2021) discusses the post-COVID-19 pandemic in the United Arab Emirates, which made face-to-face contact between students and teachers impossible in HEIs, it was necessary to implement new resources for education to continue. The aim of the study was to evaluate the success of the *e-learning* system adopted by HEIs to offer real-time online education to students while staying at home in social distancing. The research was carried out through a quantitative method, obtained 1,351 questionnaire responses, a sample of students from public and private universities in the United Arab Emirates and were analyzed through *InfQual*, *SysQual*, *SysPuse* and *SysImp* software. The study highlights benefits of the *e-learning* system adopted by HEIs, in response to the impossibility of face-to-face contact between students and teachers, HEIs implemented *e-learning* systems that beneficially allowed the provision of *online* education in real time, enabling students to continue their studies while remaining at home in social distancing, opening up possibilities for courses to be offered in the post-pandemic hybrid and face-to-face format. These *e-learning* systems incorporate a variety of *software*, such as *MS Teams*, *Zoom*, *Blackboard Collaboratives*, *Adobe Connect*, *Canvas*, *Webex*, *Google Meet*, *Google Classroom*, among others, which facilitate communication between students, teachers, and institutions. The survey results reveal that many working students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the *e-learning* system during the pandemic, as they were able to successfully reconcile work and educational life.

In the study conducted by Lovell, Dolamore, and Collins (2022), through a literature review and interviews at universities in the United States, with the aim of exploring perceptions to face challenges in the administrative and teaching departments, the authors highlighted the importance of authenticity and empathy in organizational communication in the administrative and teaching sectors of HEIs in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, universities have had to revamp their communication strategies, with email playing a central role in the exchange of information in internal communication. This shift involved transitioning from in-person to virtual meetings and from in-person to remote communication. Empathy in communication helped to soften the barriers and conflicting interpretations arising from the lack of communication in HEIs.

Letlatsa (2022) emphasizes the importance of HEIs implementing effective communication strategies to communicate with the external environment and achieve their institutional objectives. The study conducted by Letlatsa (2022) employed a research approach of a mixed nature, with the



central objective of evaluating the communication strategies adopted by HEIs located in the Africa region. The study highlights that organizational culture plays a key role in improving internal and external communication, contributing to the development of healthy relationships and the management of the institution's reputation in the market. The implementation of an organizational culture strengthens managers in the formulation of open strategies, in the promotion of transparency in the vision of the business and in the involvement of employees. This also involves dean-led corporate governance to enhance internal strategies. The organizational culture within the HEIs guides the actions of the internal members and facilitates the successful implementation of the strategy, involving *stakeholders* in the formulation, implementation and review of the institution's business plan.

Communication theory was studied by Lim and Chuah (2022) in HEIs, through questionnaires and interviews, to identify the importance of communicating shared consensus between strategic levels, with 149 managers from various institutions in Malaysia. Effective communication has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the efficiency of the strategy and the achievement of organizational objectives. This is due to the fact that communication is intrinsically linked to the strategic consensus among the managers of the HEIs, which facilitates the implementation of strategies related to teaching. Communication is essential in the strategic implementation process, allowing managers to share plans and set goals collaboratively, aiming for organizational success.

Chart 02 represents the systematization of the themes of organizational communication and HEIs, found through the systematic review of the literature, through its benefits found in the selected articles.

Table 02 – Systematization of the benefits of organizational communication and Higher Education Institutions

Concept	Author
Technologies assist in the transmission of organizational communication; Creates relationships with <i>stakeholders</i> ;	Gamboa (2018)
Creation of communication metrics to measure impacts;	- Segura-Mariño, Paniagua-Rojano and Pine-Naval (2020)
Creation of use of <i>e-learning platforms</i> for internal and external communication; Bonding relationships with <i>stakeholders</i> ;	Milas Z., Milas D. (2021)
Organizational communication stimulates leadership; Organizational communication stimulates people engagement;	Kim <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Implementation of communication systems with the entire organization (<i>stakeholders</i>);	Chaudhry <i>et al.</i> (2021)



Empathetic communication through leaders and organizational culture;	Lovell, Dolamore & Collins (2021)
Implementation of organizational and institutional culture; Inclusion of <i>stakeholders</i> in communication processes	Letlatsa (2022)
Organizational communication; Strategic implementation in HEIs	Lim e Chuah (2022)

Source: The authors, 2023.

Chart 02 systematizes the main concepts found in the research of the authors mentioned in the intersection of the *keywords* "organizational communication" and "Higher Education Institutions". The results of the research mentioned in Chart 02 corroborate the objectives of this study, to strengthen the theory of organizational communication with the object of study HEI.

Therefore, organizational communication exchanges knowledge, stimulates dialogue with teams and *stakeholders* (Gamboa, 2018), stimulates leadership and empathy from leaders to engage people as per (Kim *et al.*, 2021; Lovell; Dolamore; Collins, 2022), encourages the implementation of new tools to facilitate organizational communication (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021; Milas Z., Milas D., 2021), the implementation of organizational and institutional culture (Letlatsa, 2022), and optimizes strategic implementations, such as technological ones, to facilitate the means of communication and learning, bringing benefits to HEIs (Lim; Chuah, 2022).

SYSTEMATIZATION OF THE CHALLENGES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

The challenges associated with organizational communication and HEIs regarding the challenges associated with organizational communication and HEIs, the study by Gamboa (2018) highlights the importance of understanding the perspective of teachers in relation to these technologies, the qualitative research carried out through semi-structured interviews shows that the effective use of these technologies requires time and effort. In addition, the adaptation and successful implementation of these technologies can be a challenge, as it requires constant training and updating of teachers. However, the potential benefits outweigh these challenges, as technologies can improve organizational communication and strengthen the relationship between stakeholders of educational institutions, playing a key role in the strategic maintenance of these institutions. Therefore, while there are challenges to overcome, organizational communication through technologies offers valuable opportunities for the Higher Education sector.

The study by Segura-Mariño, Paniagua-Rojano and Piñeiro-Naval (2020) also identified significant challenges. One of the main findings was the lack of a well-defined communication structure in many HEIs, including the absence of structured communication departments. To achieve



the benefits of interactive communication, these institutions would need to value communication and adopt analytics and metrics to assess the impact of their communication strategies. In addition, the need to create technology and information departments to facilitate communication with students and develop transdisciplinary perspectives was highlighted as a major challenge. These steps would be essential to improve the reputation of HEIs through digital communication with the academic community.

The study by Milas Z and Milas D (2021) also identifies challenges associated with digital transformation and internal communication in HEIs. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on students' digital literacy and the need for educational institutions to adapt. The transition to distance learning required internal teams in HEIs, including crisis committees, to develop strategies to work remotely and maintain effective communication. This was instrumental in ensuring that notices and meetings were conducted efficiently, often with the use of *e-learning platforms*. Therefore, digital transformation has brought with it operational and organizational challenges that institutions have had to overcome to adapt to this new teaching landscape.

Kim *et al.* (2021) found that organizational communication and transformational leadership also face challenges. To effectively implement organizational communication and foster knowledge sharing, it is necessary for all members of HEIs to contribute ideas and join efforts to promote strategic changes and adjustments. This can be challenging since it involves changing employee behavior. In addition, leaders need to provide innovative direction and vision to stay competitive and encourage knowledge sharing. Therefore, the successful implementation of organizational communication and transformational leadership requires a collaborative approach and overcoming challenges related to organizational culture and knowledge sharing, which become challenges for HEIs.

The challenges faced by HEIs, in the study by Chaudhry *et al.* (2021), included the need for training and technological adaptation for students and teachers adapting to *e-learning* systems, as well as the curricular adaptation for online teaching. In addition, ensuring equitable access to online education, especially in terms of connectivity and device availability, was a key challenge. Maintaining the quality of teaching in a virtual environment and ensuring the participation and engagement of distance learners could also be significant challenges faced by institutions during the transition to distance learning, especially in emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the other hand, the study by Lovell, Dolamore and Collins (2022) highlights some challenges faced by HEIs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to distance communication generated personal and academic challenges, since many professionals did not have knowledge and access to the home office and digital platforms. The lack of face-to-face communication has also made email interactions and virtual meetings more susceptible to conflicting interpretations, which



could lead to internal conflicts. In addition, long-distance communication could give rise to denial and prejudice, creating barriers in connections. University managers and deans were challenged to support organizational culture, promoting respect and knowledge sharing to reduce these barriers and create harmonious environments, both in virtual and face-to-face environments.

On the other hand, the study by Letlasi (2022) highlights the challenges faced by HEIs in the implementation of communication strategies and organizational culture. One of the challenges mentioned is the lack of an internally structured organizational culture, which can affect the implementation of strategic communication plans. In addition, implementing a culture of communication strategy requires specific steps, such as engaging stakeholders to highlight institutional values, identifying *stakeholders*, and reviewing communication platforms for internal and external members. These steps can pose operational and organizational challenges for institutions looking to improve their communication and organizational culture.

Lim and Chuah (2022) also identified challenges to a strategic communication implementation, which requires time, effort, dedication, and resources. This process, although beneficial, can face obstacles and challenges that may arise in the external environment and affect the internal institutional environment of HEIs. These challenges can include issues such as adapting to changes in the education market, competing with other institutions, and effectively managing resources to achieve strategic goals.

Chart 03 emphasizes the main challenges found in the studies of this systematic review of the literature of the keywords: organizational communication and HEIs, which corroborate the objective of this research.

Table 03 – Systematization of the challenges between organizational communication and Higher Education Institutions

Concept	Author
Challenges in organizational communication and ICT integration; Challenges in the implementation of technologies in the educational environment	Gamboa (2018)
Lack of structured communication departments in HEIs	- Segura-Mariño, Paniagua-Rojano and Pine-Naval (2020)
Challenges in digital literacy; Challenges in the transition to distance learning	Milas Z., Milas D. (2021)
Challenges in internal communication during digital transformation	Kim <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Challenges in the transition to distance learning; Challenges in adapting the teaching curriculum and <i>e-learning systems</i>	Chaudhry <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Challenges in long-distance communication and conflicting interpretations	Lovell, Dolamore & Collins (2021)



Challenges in the implementation of structured organizational culture; Challenges in implementing communication strategies	Letlatsa (2022)
Challenges in strategic implementation, including time, effort, and resources	Lim e Chuah (2022)

Source: The authors, 2023.

Considering the analyses of the challenges identified in Chart 03, it is possible to observe common challenges in HEIs. These challenges involve adapting to technological changes, transitioning to distance learning, and digital literacy, as discussed by Milas Z. and Milas D. (2021). In addition, the lack of effective organizational communication structures, evidenced by Segura-Mariño *et al.* (2020), highlights the importance of strategic communication planning. Kim *et al.* (2021) also emphasize challenges in internal communication during digital transformation, underscoring the need for effective leadership and communication strategies. Such challenges reinforce the importance of preparation, training and effective communication strategies to deal with the significant changes in the educational and organizational environment, highlighting the relevance of effective communication and organizational culture in times of transformation.

SYSTEMATIZATION OF THE RESEARCH FOUND

The analysis of the results of these studies on organizational communication in HEIs reveals a number of significant benefits and challenges. Initially, it is evident that organizational communication plays a crucial role in the educational environment. Several authors have highlighted that the adoption of information and communication technologies in HEIs has benefited the teaching-learning process, facilitating interaction between teachers, students, and academic departments as well as the interaction of *e-learning* tools (Gamboa, 2018; Milas; Milas, 2021). This results in a benefit in greater innovation and improvement of educational processes, promoting effective transmission in communication systems (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021). But also, communication systems can result in challenges, as it requires resources and investments for the implementation of effective communication systems and adaptation of all HEIs.

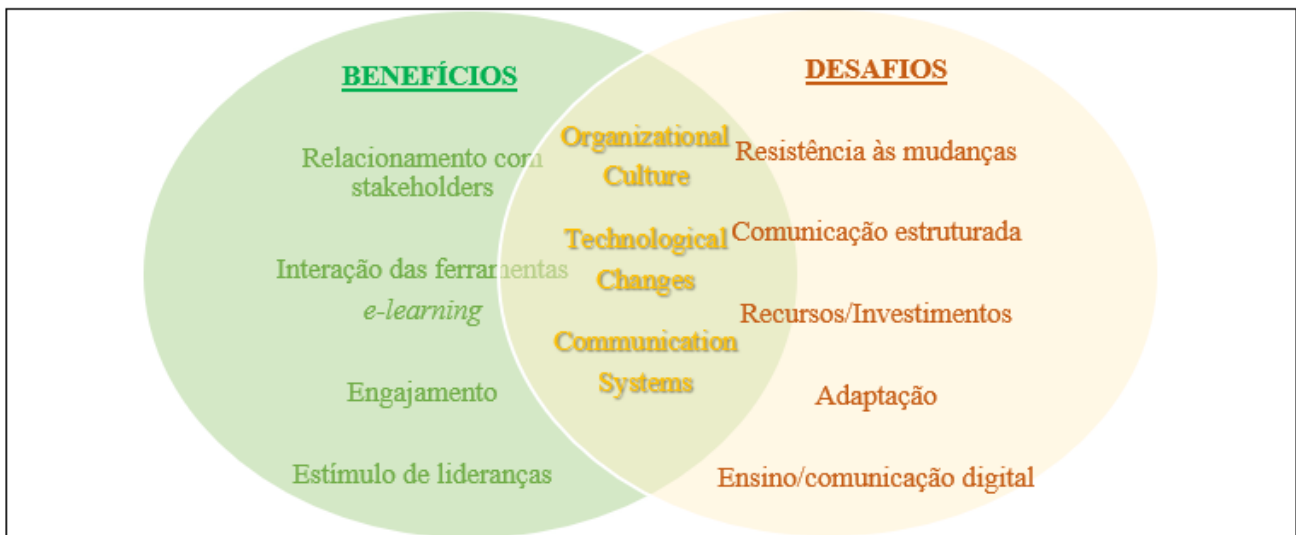
In addition to the benefits, research also points to significant challenges faced by HEIs. The transition to digital education, amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, brought with it the need to address challenges such as the digital literacy of students and teachers, as well as the adaptation to new tools and platforms generated in communication systems (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021). This change also impacted the dynamics of internal communication between departments of HEIs, requiring the implementation of digital tools for document management and education administration (Milas Z.; Milas D., 2021).

The lack of a structured organizational culture in some HEIs is an obstacle that has been identified in several studies, in which it was found that its absence or weakness can create barriers in communication and knowledge sharing (Letlatsa, 2022). Transformational leadership, mentioned by Kim *et al.* (2021), was highlighted as an effective strategy to overcome challenges and promote innovation. Transformational leaders provide an innovative vision, encourage knowledge sharing and employee engagement in all HEI processes.

According to Segura-Mariño, Paniagua-Rojano, and Piñeiro-Naval (2020), the lack of a structured communication department was highlighted as a limitation, affecting the analysis and metrics of communication strategies. This challenge can result in less effective communication, especially in an environment where digital communication and interaction with students are crucial. On the other hand, Lovell, Dolamore, and Collins (2021) emphasize the importance of empathy and authenticity in organizational communication in HEIs, achieving empathetic communication. The transition to virtual meetings and remote communication during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought personal and academic challenges, such as mastering digital platforms. Lack of face-to-face communication can lead to misinterpretations and internal conflicts.

Figure 01 systematizes a comprehensive analysis of studies on organizational communication in HEIs, of the benefits and challenges.

Figure 01 – Systematization of the Benefits and Challenges of Organizational Communication in Higher Education Institutions



Source: The authors, 2023.

Figure 01 illustrates how effective, technology-driven communication benefits innovation and improves educational processes. Facing challenges, such as the transition to post-pandemic digital education, obstacles such as digital literacy and the need for a structured organizational culture stand out. Leadership encouragement is evidenced as an effective strategy to overcome challenges.



CONCLUSION

Organizational communication plays a crucial role in HEIs, influencing both the coping with challenges and the search for benefits. Institutions have had to adapt quickly to cope with the transition to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, facing significant obstacles such as the inability of face-to-face contact between students and faculty. However, this study reveals that the successful implementation of the distance learning system can be highly satisfactory for students, allowing for work-life balance. This demonstrates how organizational communication can be a valuable tool for addressing challenges and providing tangible benefits, such as flexibility in teaching and student satisfaction, even in times of change.

In the set of studies analyzed, the intrinsic challenges and benefits of organizational communication in HEIs clearly emerge. Authors such as Milas Z. and Milas D. (2021) highlighted the transition to distance learning, digital literacy, and the lack of effective organizational communication structures as predominant challenges that demand attention and adaptation by HEIs. These obstacles are compounded by rapid technological changes, requiring a continuous effort to keep up. In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the HEIs that are the subject of this study.

However, on the other hand, studies also highlight significant benefits associated with organizational communication. Authors such as Segura-Mariño *et al.* (2020) recognize effective communication as a driving force for institutional success, enabling the sharing of plans and goals, strengthening relationships with stakeholders, and contributing to efficiency in the implementation of educational strategies. In addition, authors such as Kim *et al.* (2021) point out that a strong organizational culture and knowledge sharing are factors that help HEIs face these challenges. It is critical that HEIs are prepared to face the challenges, recognizing that continuous adaptation to changes in the educational and organizational landscape is necessary. Well-planned strategies and investments in organizational culture, as suggested by Letlatsa (2022), are essential to enable institutions to thrive, maintain healthy and effective relationships with their stakeholders, and achieve their teaching and research goals in an ever-changing environment. However, effective organizational communication and institutional culture, as discussed by Lovell, Dolamore, and Collins (2021), are valuable resources that can help HEIs thrive in the face of dynamic challenges and constant uncertainties. Therefore, organizational communication plays a vital role in adaptation strategies and in the search for improvements for HEIs, especially in contexts of change and uncertainty.

However, despite the benefits and challenges identified, it is important to recognize that each HEI may face unique circumstances in its specific context. Therefore, organizational communication strategies must be adapted to the needs and characteristics of each institution. Ultimately, the



research provides a comprehensive overview of the benefits and challenges faced by HEIs with regard to organizational communication, providing valuable guidelines for enhancing communication practices and promoting institutional success in an ever-changing educational environment as digital teaching accelerates as the COVID-19 pandemic accelerates.

The limitations of this study were the number of studies in HEIs in underdeveloped countries, and few studies in HEIs in Latin America. In the case of Brazil, no studies were found on the benefits and challenges of organizational communication. For suggestions for future research, a case study or the use of questionnaire methods and interviews with deans, vice-rectors and administrative, communication and marketing managers can be advised to evaluate other impacts caused by the post-COVID of organizational communication, and to analyze possible strategies adopted.

As theoretical gaps found, it is possible to analyze the lack of research on specific organizational communication strategies in HEIs. While surveys provide an overview of the challenges and benefits, there is a need for more detailed research that looks at the specific communication strategies that institutions are adopting to address the challenges and optimize the benefits. The research found through the systematic review offers valuable insights into the situation of organizational communication in HEIs at specific times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



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