

## Organizational Communication Approach of Katherine Miller in the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province: A Phenomenological Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the suboptimal implementation of a structured organizational communication approach within the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province. The research problem addressed is how Katherine Miller's organizational communication approach is applied within the Bureau. The study employs Miller's organizational communication theory, which consists of four key indicators: direction, channel, content, and communication style. A qualitative method with a phenomenological design was used to explore employees' subjective experiences of organizational communication practices. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, with thematic and interpretive analysis employed. The findings reveal that communication in the Bureau occurs multidirectionally, is adaptive to digital channels, includes inclusive content, and adopts a flexible communication style.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the context of modern public administration, organizational communication functions not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a fundamental foundation in carrying out managerial, coordinative, and public service functions effectively. Communication is an integral part of organizational governance, especially within complex and hierarchical bureaucratic structures such as those in regional government institutions (Irawan, 2025). Social change and the advancement of information technology have also influenced the dynamics of communication within government organizations. Today, organizational communication no longer occurs solely in vertical and formal patterns but has developed into a multidirectional process involving various digital channels (Aji, Kom, & Kom, 2024).

The Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of East Java Province is a work unit responsible for overseeing planning, staffing, leadership communication, documentation, and protocol functions. The Bureau plays a strategic role in ensuring the effectiveness of communication and coordination among internal units, and in supporting the duties of regional leaders (Sulistyoati, 2021). The core problem in this study lies in the suboptimal implementation of a structured organizational communication approach within the Bureau. In practice, communication among staff tends to be informal, poorly documented, and the utilization of digital communication technologies remains limited. This condition affects the effectiveness of information delivery, work coordination, and interpersonal relationships among employees, which in turn directly impacts the quality of bureaucratic services.

This research aims to deeply understand how Katherine Miller's organizational communication approach is applied in communication practices within the Bureau. The study focuses on four essential aspects: (1) communication direction (top-down, horizontal, or multidirectional); (2) communication channels (face-to-face and digital media); (3) communication content (formal/informal, social/innovative); and (4) communication style (official or personal). The analysis of these aspects will describe how communication patterns are shaped, experienced, and enacted by individuals in the organization, as well as their implications for work effectiveness, coordination, and interpersonal relationships. The novelty of this study lies in the use of Katherine Miller's theoretical approach, which is rarely applied explicitly in the context of Indonesian government bureaucracy, along with the use of phenomenological methods to explore the subjective meanings of communication. This approach enables the study not only to explain communication patterns structurally but also to uncover individual experiences and perceptions in authentically and contextually engaging with organizational communication.

This research is considered important as effective organizational communication serves as a key foundation in supporting bureaucratic performance, particularly within government institutions. By examining communication patterns through Miller's framework and a phenomenological lens, this study is expected to reveal the real dynamics of communication in terms of direction, channels, content, and style, and to provide strategic recommendations for improving coordination, work effectiveness, and the quality of interpersonal relationships within the governmental bureaucracy.

## LITERATUR REVIEW

This research is built upon several previous studies relevant to the field of organizational communication, particularly within bureaucratic environments and public service institutions. The study by Yunanta, Romadhan, and Rizqi (2024) indicates that the organizational communication approach applied in the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province, tends to align with the human resources approach. The study highlights the importance of two-way communication, the use of digital media such as WhatsApp, and the combination of formal and informal communication styles in supporting the effectiveness of bureaucratic organizational performance. These findings serve as an initial basis indicating that organizational communication within governmental institutions has shifted from a classical pattern toward a more flexible and participatory model. However, the study has not explicitly linked its analysis to a comprehensive theoretical framework such as Katherine Miller's approach, nor has it explored the subjective meanings of communication experiences in depth.

Another study by Hartanto (2023) found a significant relationship between organizational communication and the performance of executive nurses, with supervision and guidance being the most influential variables. This confirms that communication is not merely about information exchange but involves coaching and motivation through structured and measurable approaches. Similarly, Rudianti, Handiyani, and Sabri (2013), in a hospital context, emphasized the importance of organizational communication in enhancing nurses' performance, where communication strategies play a key role in creating a more productive and coordinated work environment.

Asri (2022) described organizational communication strategies at the Training Center for Administrative Staff at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, focusing on how communication is used to foster message reception, motivate action, and reward high-performing employees. This illustrates that effective internal communication can serve as a strategic instrument in shaping a positive work culture within bureaucratic institutions.

Hamandia (2022), in his research at RRI Palembang, emphasized the role of leadership communication strategies in motivating employees by applying Wilson and Ogden's communication planning model, which includes preliminary research, action planning, recognition-based communication, and periodic evaluation. He also integrated McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, showing how leadership perception of employee characteristics influences the communication style adopted. This study illustrates how communication is practically used not only as a message transmission tool but also as a human resource management instrument.

From these studies, it is evident that most organizational communication approaches still focus on functional and structural dimensions. Few studies have explicitly applied Katherine Miller's theoretical approach within the context of Indonesian government bureaucracy. Miller's framework offers a comprehensive conceptual structure, encompassing content, direction, channels, and communication style, which together portray the complexity of interactions in organizations in a more holistic and integrative manner.

Moreover, few studies employ a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective meaning of communication processes experienced by bureaucratic personnel in their daily routines. The phenomenological approach places individual experiences at the center of analysis, allowing researchers to authentically understand the communication reality from a first-person perspective. This becomes the core novelty of the present study.

This research combines the strengths of Katherine Miller's theoretical framework with phenomenological methods to provide a deeper understanding of organizational communication patterns in bureaucratic environments, particularly in the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of East Java Province. The study is grounded in Organizational Communication Theory, which explains how communication processes function within an organizational structure to achieve predefined goals. In the bureaucratic government context, this theory is highly relevant, as interpersonal communication within organizations plays a vital role in supporting the smooth implementation of institutional duties and functions. Effective communication bridges the relationship between leaders and staff, as well as across units, ensuring strong coordination and optimal work productivity (Solong & Yadi, 2021). This research emphasizes two main forms of communication: vertical and horizontal. Vertical communication includes the flow of information from superiors to subordinates and vice versa, while horizontal communication occurs among employees at the same level. Both forms are believed to significantly impact organizational performance, particularly in supporting administrative services for regional leadership (Izzati, 2023).

The application of Katherine Miller's theory of organizational communication, as adopted in Kussanti (2020), is reflected in four core aspects observed in the Bureau of Leadership Administration: first, the direction of communication includes top-down, horizontal, and multidirectional flows, indicating flexibility in information transmission across organizational levels. Second, the communication channels used involve face-to-face interactions and digital platforms, demonstrating adaptability to modern bureaucratic communication needs. Third, the content of communication combines formal and informal messages and includes social and innovative elements, indicating openness in building more humanistic and adaptive work relationships. Fourth, the communication style remains formal but allows for personal interaction in certain contexts.

The application of Miller's theory in this research is relevant due to its focus on the dynamics of communication within modern organizational structures. This theory enables researchers to understand how communication functions not only as a tool for transmitting information but also as a strategic instrument for enhancing work effectiveness, cross-functional collaboration, and supporting more efficient and responsive administrative processes in government settings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method. The aim of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and perceived meanings of employees regarding organizational communication practices within the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of East Java Province. The study refers to Katherine Miller's theory of organizational communication. The phenomenological approach was chosen for its ability to contextually and deeply explore how communication is experienced, interpreted, and practiced by organizational actors in both formal and informal relationships (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The primary data sources in this study are informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of structural officials, operational staff, and individuals actively involved in the organizational communication process. This selection aims to obtain diverse and in-depth perspectives on the communication dynamics taking place (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and the review of internal organizational documents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore personal experiences, perceptions, and informants' interpretations of the communication patterns they encountered. Observations took place in the bureau's office environment, during internal meetings, and throughout daily organizational activities (Romdona, Junista, & Gunawan, 2025).

Data were analyzed using a thematic and interpretive approach, following the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure the validity of the findings, the study applied source and method triangulation, along with member checking to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

Katherine Miller's organizational communication theory, as elaborated in Kussanti (2020), provides a robust conceptual framework for analyzing communication dynamics within modern bureaucratic settings. The theory highlights four key aspects of organizational communication: communication direction, communication channels, communication content, and communication style. These aspects not only reflect the formal communication structure in organizations but also illustrate the level of adaptability and the depth of interpersonal relationships within them.

### ***Communication Direction***

In the context of the Bureau, communication direction reflects a high degree of flexibility in the flow of information. Field findings reveal that communication is not only vertical (top-down) from superiors to subordinates, but also occurs horizontally among peers and even upward (bottom-up), indicating organizational openness to feedback at all levels. This multidirectional pattern represents a shift from rigid, one-way communication to a participatory model typical of modern organizations. From a phenomenological perspective, employees perceive this as an opportunity to express ideas, strengthen coordination, and build mutual trust between leaders and staff.

### ***Communication Channels***

The Bureau utilizes diverse communication channels, both formal (such as official letters and internal reports) and informal (such as face-to-face meetings and digital platforms like WhatsApp groups and email). Informants' experiences suggest that digital media are particularly effective in accelerating information flow, especially in situations requiring rapid responses. These channels enhance work efficiency and are seen as an innovative form of organizational communication responsive to the evolving digital era. Phenomenologically, communication channels are viewed not only as tools for task execution but also as means of strengthening interpersonal and emotional connections.

### ***Communication Content***

Communication content in the Bureau includes a mix of formal messages (e.g., instructions, reports) and informal messages (e.g., personal greetings, casual conversations). Moreover, it encompasses social and innovative dimensions, such as ideas for workflow improvement or individual initiatives. For employees, content serves not only to coordinate tasks but also to reinforce social relations and organizational culture. Phenomenologically, this diversity in content is perceived as an expression of the Bureau's openness to fostering an inclusive, humanistic, and adaptive work environment.

### ***Communication Style***

The communication style implemented in the Bureau is formal and professional, but it still allows for personal interaction in specific contexts. In informal activities such as casual discussions or non-structured meetings—communication becomes more relaxed and friendly. Informants describe this style as creating a more comfortable and open work environment, reducing interpersonal tension. From a phenomenological lens, flexible communication style is interpreted as part of the organization's effort to foster a healthy and collaborative workplace atmosphere.

### ***Analysis Summary***

Based on the four indicators of Katherine Miller's theory, the organizational communication approach implemented in the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province, clearly exhibits the characteristics of a human resources approach. Communication occurs in a multidirectional manner, utilizing varied channels, encompassing inclusive content, and adopting an adaptive communication style. Through a phenomenological lens, it can be concluded that employees do not perceive communication merely as a structural duty, but as a meaningful space for participation, relationship building, and enhancing work effectiveness in a human-centered manner. The findings of Yunanta et al. (2024) support this study, indicating that communication within the Bureau is dominantly participatory and follows a human resources approach characterized by multidirectional flows.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Communication Direction: Fostering an Open and Participatory Organization***

Communication direction within the Bureau is no longer limited to a one-way or strictly vertical (top-down) flow from superiors to subordinates, as is typically found in traditional bureaucratic structures. Instead, communication also occurs horizontally among employees and even upward (bottom-up) from subordinates to superiors. This communication pattern demonstrates that the Bureau has built a multidirectional communication system, where every individual has the opportunity to express opinions, ideas, and even constructive criticism openly.

Within Katherine Miller's theoretical framework, this direction of communication reflects the human resources approach, which emphasizes the active participation of all organizational members in communication and decision-making processes. It signifies a transition toward a modern organization that prioritizes collaboration and participation alongside hierarchical structure. From a phenomenological perspective, employees interpret this multidirectional communication as positive. They see it as a space to contribute meaningfully, build mutual trust between leaders and staff, and strengthen inter-departmental coordination. This open, two-way communication fosters a sense of appreciation, which in turn enhances morale and loyalty to the organization.

### ***Communication Channels: Adapting to the Dynamics of the Times***

Another notable finding is the diverse use of communication channels in supporting the smooth flow of information and coordination within the Bureau. The channels used are not limited to formal mechanisms such as official letters or reports, but also include informal and digital communication methods, such as direct meetings (small group discussions), WhatsApp groups, and email. The use of digital media emerges as a prominent aspect of this study. Employees utilize messaging applications for daily updates, rapid coordination, and informal discussions. The speed and accessibility of these digital channels are seen as highly supportive for efficient task completion, especially in situations requiring quick responses, such as schedule changes or urgent directives from leadership.

From Miller's theoretical viewpoint, this flexible use of channels signals the organization's adaptability and openness to communication. Within the human resources approach, modern organizations are expected to provide communication spaces that facilitate dialogue both formal and informal. Digital platforms extend these spaces, enabling better connectivity and quicker, more accurate information flows. Phenomenologically, communication channels are not merely technical tools but are understood by employees as emotional bridges that strengthen interpersonal bonds. For instance, WhatsApp groups serve not only to discuss work-related matters but also function as informal spaces fostering camaraderie and solidarity among staff. This type of communication creates a more relaxed, supportive atmosphere and diminishes hierarchical gaps.

### ***Communication Content: Fostering an Inclusive and Innovative Organizational Culture***

Communication content within the Bureau reveals a balance between formal and informal messages. Formal communication includes directives, work reports, agendas, and administrative regulations, while informal communication takes the form of personal greetings, light conversations, and the exchange of ideas in casual settings. These modes coexist in the Bureau's daily operations.

The findings indicate that content is not limited to bureaucratic information delivery, but also includes social and innovative dimensions. Employees feel encouraged to voice ideas, constructive criticism, or initiatives that could improve Bureau performance. This reflects the application of the human resources approach in Miller's theory, where the organization enables productive dialogue and employee empowerment. From a phenomenological perspective, the diversity of communication content is perceived as a sign of openness and organizational trust in individual potential. Communication serves not only as a control tool but also as a medium for expression and reinforcing shared values. This contributes to the formation of a work culture that is inclusive, humanistic, and adaptable to change and employee needs. Employees feel more valued and are more motivated to engage actively in work processes.

### ***Communication Style: Building a Healthy and Collaborative Work Environment***

The communication style within the Bureau is formal and professional, in line with the government's structural organization. However, field observations also reveal flexibility in communication style, especially in informal interactions. During small group meetings, team discussions, or social activities, communication becomes more casual and personal. This flexible style strikes a balance between formal authority and emotional closeness. In Miller's theory, flexibility in communication style is a hallmark of the human resources approach, where the organization promotes not just hierarchical compliance but also humane and empathetic interaction. It fosters not only vertical work relationships but also horizontal, trust-based connections rooted in mutual respect and empathy. From the phenomenological viewpoint, employees interpret this style as part of a healthy work atmosphere. They feel more comfortable, less pressured, and more open to sharing ideas or concerns. Such warm and relaxed communication enhances solidarity and teamwork, contributing to smoother coordination and task completion.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the analysis of the four indicators in Katherine Miller's theory of organizational communication namely communication direction, communication channels, communication content, and communication style – it can be concluded that the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province, implements an organizational communication pattern that strongly and consistently reflects the characteristics of the human resources approach.

Communication within the Bureau occurs in a multidirectional manner, meaning that information flows not only from top to bottom (top-down), but also horizontally among employees and upward (bottom-up). This reflects the organization's openness to participation at all levels of communication. In addition, the Bureau utilizes various communication channels, ranging from formal mechanisms such as official memos to digital media like email and WhatsApp groups, demonstrating its adaptability to modern work demands.

In terms of content, communication encompasses not only work instructions or technical information, but also reflects social values, collaboration, and innovation within the organizational environment. The communication style applied is flexible professional, yet allowing for personal interaction when appropriate thus creating a more comfortable and collaborative work atmosphere. Through a phenomenological approach, it is understood that employees do not merely engage in communication as a formal structural function, but also perceive it as a space for participation, relationship building, and enhancing work effectiveness in a human-centered manner. These findings affirm that open, adaptive, and inclusive communication is a critical element in shaping a bureaucracy that is responsive, professional, and oriented toward human resource development.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the Bureau of Leadership Administration, Regional Secretariat of East Java Province, continue to develop a more structured and participatory communication system, particularly by strengthening multidirectional communication between leadership and staff. This enhancement can be achieved through organizational communication training, the establishment of regular internal discussion forums, and the formulation of flexible and adaptive communication standard operating procedures (SOPs).

In addition, the use of digital media such as WhatsApp groups and email should be optimized not only for technical coordination but also as a platform for cultivating an inclusive, open, and collaborative organizational culture. Informal communication that develops in digital spaces needs to be positively directed to support work effectiveness and reinforce interpersonal relationships within the organization. These recommendations are crucial for improving the quality of bureaucratic communication toward a more professional and responsive model of governance.

#### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

1. First, it is suggested that future studies explore intergenerational communication within government bureaucracy, particularly between senior civil servants and younger staff members. This is essential to understand the dynamics of differing communication styles, work patterns, and perceptions across generations, which may influence the overall effectiveness of organizational communication.
2. Second, it is recommended to develop research using an organizational ethnography approach to gain deeper insights into the naturally formed communication culture within the workplace. This approach will help identify norms, symbols, and daily communication practices that may not be fully revealed through phenomenological methods.

These two recommendations aim to broaden the contextual understanding of organizational communication in bureaucratic environments and contribute to the development of more adaptive and inclusive internal communication policies.

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