



Open Organizational Climate As An Organizational Communication Strategy Of Pt. Utero Kreatif Indonesia In Efforts To Improve Employee Productivity

Irfani Zukhrufillah¹, Mohammad Untung², Ferry Indra Sukma³

^{1,2,3} University of Malang, Indonesia,
Email:

irfani.zukhrufillah@unigamalang.ac.id

*Corresponding Author Email:

irfani.zukhrufillah@unigamalang.ac.id

Received: December 15, 2024

Revised: December 25, 2024

Accepted: January 25, 2025

Abstract

This study analyzes how an open organizational climate is used as a communication strategy to enhance employee productivity at PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from in-depth interviews, observations, and documents. Findings show the strategy blends formal channels (like weekly meetings) with dominant informal ones (e.g., casual chats and WhatsApp). A communicative and supportive leadership style fostered responsibility and emotional attachment among employees. However, subtle hierarchies based on seniority and ambiguous reward systems were key barriers, limiting genuine participation and motivation. The study concludes that an open climate acts as a communication meta-strategy, indirectly boosting productivity by promoting psychological safety, role clarity, and recognition. Success depends on balancing formal communication with authentic informal dialogue while addressing hidden cultural obstacles. This research adds to the literature by integrating organizational climate theory with communication strategy in an Indonesian creative company context.

Keyword: Open Organizational Climate, Organizational Communication Strategy, Productivity, Communicative Leadership, Qualitative Case Study.

1. Introduction

The 21st-century workplace presents a paradox: while innovation and productivity demands are higher than ever, issues of disengagement, burnout, and turnover persist. This tension is acutely felt in creative firms such as PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia, where ideas, creativity, and human energy are the core assets. Despite operating in a sector perceived as inherently flexible, early observations point to distinct challenges. Employees report feeling constant pressure to perform, yet they often describe communication and decision-making processes as centralized, lacking transparency, and offering little room for genuine participation (Initial Interview, April 2023). This misalignment creates a significant gap between the company's productivity goals and the psychological realities of its workforce, which may ultimately undermine performance.

The organizational climate—or work environment—has long been understood as a key driver of employee behavior and outcomes (Schneider et al., 2013). Not all climates are beneficial, however. Those that are closed, bureaucratic, or uncertain can become sources of stress and reduced productivity. In contrast, an open organizational climate, marked by transparency, psychological safety, participatory decision-making, and constructive dialogue, is seen as a catalyst for intrinsic motivation, innovation, and sustained productivity (Owens & Baker, 2020).

Conducting this research is critical for three interrelated reasons. First, from a practical standpoint, creative enterprises like PT. Utero depend heavily on their human capital. Developing communication strategies that foster a healthy work climate is therefore not merely advantageous—it is a strategic imperative for competitiveness and growth. This study aims to offer management a tangible roadmap toward that end. Second, academically, while organizational climate and communication have each been studied extensively, research treating an open climate as an intentional communication strategy—rather than a cultural byproduct—remains scarce, particularly in Indonesia (Darma & Putra, 2021). This research seeks to bridge these two theoretical domains. Third, contextually, an in-depth case study of a creative company in Malang allows for nuanced insights often absent in broad quantitative studies. A deep exploration of local dynamics, work culture, and interpersonal interactions at PT. Utero can generate findings that are both context-sensitive and actionable.

Against this backdrop, the present study is designed to investigate how an open organizational climate is enacted as a deliberate communication strategy at PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia. It further seeks to identify the factors that support or hinder this strategy's implementation and to examine how these factors shape efforts to enhance employee productivity..

2. The Art of Research

Based on the gap identification above, this research offers four dimensions of novelty (novelty) that are significant:

1. Contextual Novelty: An In-depth Study of a Local Creative Agency



This research addresses the lack of in-depth studies on small-to-medium creative agencies in Indonesia. While previous research has largely focused on public organizations or large manufacturing firms, the dynamics at PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia—as a company characterized by knowledge workers and a flat structure—provide a unique context. This intrinsic case study offers rich, contextual insights into the implementation of communication strategies within Indonesia's creative sector, an area that remains underexplored. It also explores the input (thought processes, work culture, owner's values) that shape that strategy. This novelty enriches the literature that is often technical and instrumentalist regarding social media.

2. Analytical Novelty: A Holistic Analysis of Multi-Level Communication and Mediation Processes

This study adopts a holistic analytical approach by simultaneously examining all communication flows (vertical, horizontal, diagonal) and how interactions at each level contribute to climate formation. Furthermore, rather than focusing solely on the direct link between strategy and productivity, it traces the mediation process: how communication strategy shapes climate, and how that climate subsequently influences employee behavior and productivity. This chain-of-influence analysis provides deeper mechanistic understanding.

3. Thematic Novelty: From "Effective Communication" to "Managed Openness"

The thematic focus of this research shifts from merely measuring "communication effectiveness" to exploring "managed openness." It reveals how the company designs formal and informal channels to foster openness while also being constrained and moderated by hidden organizational cultural norms (such as subtle hierarchy and *sungkan*—reluctance). This theme adds nuance to understanding the implementation of an open climate within an Indonesian cultural context.

4. Building on prior research, this study addresses conceptual, contextual, analytical, and thematic gaps. Its contribution lies in offering fourfold novelty: (1) repositioning open climate as a core communication strategy, (2) in-depth exploration of an Indonesian creative company context, (3) holistic analysis of multi-level communication and mediation processes, and (4) the thematic focus on "managed openness." Thus, this research not only adds another case but enriches perspectives and analytical frameworks for understanding organizational communication practices that shape productive work climates in the contemporary era, particularly within Indonesia's creative environments.

5. Methodological Novelty: Qualitative Immersion through Integrated Multi-Method Data Collection

This study employs a methodologically novel approach by integrating three qualitative data collection techniques—semi-structured in-depth interviews, passive participatory observation, and document analysis—within a single case study design. While many prior qualitative studies rely predominantly on interviews, this research conducts 8 weeks of immersive observation to capture real-time communication dynamics, nonverbal cues, and contextual social interactions. This triangulation allows for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the gap between formal communication policies and informal workplace practices. The methodological design enables an emic, process-oriented exploration of how communication strategies are enacted, interpreted, and sometimes subverted in everyday organizational life—a perspective often missing in studies that rely solely on self-reported data.

Building on prior research, this study addresses contextual, analytical, thematic, and methodological gaps. Its contribution lies in offering fourfold novelty: (1) in-depth exploration of an Indonesian creative company context, (2) holistic analysis of multi-level communication and mediation processes, (3) the thematic focus on "managed openness," and (4) a methodologically immersive, multi-method qualitative design. Thus, this research not only adds another case but enriches perspectives and analytical frameworks for understanding organizational communication practices that shape productive work climates in the contemporary era, particularly within Indonesia's creative environment.

3. Method

This research employs a qualitative paradigm with an intrinsic single case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is suited to exploring in-depth understanding, meaning, and complex social processes related to the implementation of a communication strategy and the formation of organizational climate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The intrinsic case study design allows for a deep exploration of the specific and unique case of PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia due to its intrinsic value in understanding how an open climate is communicatively constructed within a creative company context.

The selection of this methodology is based on several fundamental considerations that strengthen its suitability for the research problem:

The research questions—focusing on "how" a strategy is implemented and "what factors" influence it—are exploratory and process-oriented. Qualitative methodology is ideal for uncovering the nuanced dynamics, perceptions, and relational mechanisms behind formal policies and informal practices, which cannot be captured through quantitative metrics alone. The phenomenon under study is deeply contextual. The success of PT. Utero's communication strategy is a product of the unique interaction between its nature as a creative agency, its flat organizational structure, the specific leadership style, and the internal culture shaped by Indonesian social norms. A case study allows the researcher to bound and analyze this specific context holistically, which is crucial for understanding the gap between strategic intent and daily practice (Yin, 2018).

To understand the construction of an open climate, data is required that reveals not only the observable outcomes (e.g., meetings held, messages sent) but, more importantly, the subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings assigned by organizational members. Such data comprising perceptions of safety, authenticity in participation, and sense of recognition—can only be optimally excavated through direct, empathetic interaction with key actors at various levels of the organization.

Philosophically, this research is grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which views organizational reality and climate as socially constructed through ongoing communication and interaction among its members. The open climate at PT. Utero is understood not as a fixed condition, but as a dynamic reality actively shaped and sustained (or constrained) by daily communicative practices.

To ensure depth, richness, and validity of data, this research applied methodological triangulation using three primary data collection techniques:

Semi-structured In-depth Interviews: Conducted with 10 informants selected through purposive sampling, comprising 1 owner, 2 managers, and 7 employees from various divisions (creative, operational, marketing). The interview guide focused on exploring perceptions of openness, communication patterns with leaders and peers, involvement in decision-making, experiences with feedback, and views on productivity drivers.

Passive Participant Observation: The researcher observed interactions in formal settings (e.g., weekly all-hands meetings) and informal settings (e.g., casual discussions, break times) over a period of 8 weeks. This allowed for the capture of non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and contextual social interactions that often remain unspoken in interviews, providing crucial insight into the "lived" experience of the organizational climate.

Document Study: Internal documents such as organizational charts, meeting minutes, internal communication memos, and digital communication artifacts (e.g., excerpts from WhatsApp group norms) were collected and analyzed. These documents served to corroborate and contextualize the data obtained from interviews and observation.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase model by Braun & Clarke (2006):

Familiarization with Data: Repeated reading of transcripts and notes.

Generating Initial Codes: Systematic coding of interesting features across the entire dataset. **Searching for Themes:** Collating codes into potential themes.

Reviewing Themes: Checking themes against the coded extracts and the entire dataset. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Refining the essence of each theme.

Producing the Report: Selecting vivid extracts and finalizing the analysis.

Data validity was strengthened through two forms of triangulation: (a) Source Triangulation, by comparing perspectives from owners, managers, and employees; and (b) Method Triangulation, by converging findings from interviews, observations, and documents. This iterative process ensured that the conclusions drawn were credible, grounded in the data, and reflective of the complex case context.

4. Result

Based on the conducted data analysis, this research reveals three main interrelated findings regarding the implementation of an open organizational climate as a communication strategy at PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia. The findings demonstrate a deliberate, yet complex, approach to fostering openness across various communicative dimensions.

A Hybrid Model of "Managed Openness": Integration of Formal and Informal Channels

PT. Utero does not rely on a single communication channel but has cultivated a hybrid system where formal and informal channels serve complementary functions to shape the organizational climate, creating a dynamic termed "managed openness."

Formal, Structured Forums: The company implements weekly all-staff meetings (all-hands meetings) where the owner transparently shares business updates, including financial challenges. This formal channel is designed to signal transparency and an official open-door policy. However, observational data revealed a critical nuance: Q&A sessions in these meetings were often dominated by managers, while junior employees remained largely silent. This indicates that while the strategy for formal openness exists, its execution does not fully guarantee equal participatory access.

Dominant Informal Networks: In practice, the most vital and frequently used channels are informal. Casual interactions ("ngopi bareng") after work and communication through cross-divisional WhatsApp groups serve as the primary arteries



for daily coordination, idea-sharing, and feedback. Employees reported that "ideas for improving work processes more often emerge in this informal setting." This aligns with theories of informal communication as a key source of innovation and psychological safety. However, these channels also have limitations; a designer noted, "It's easier to talk directly with the team leader, in the group I'm afraid of being misunderstood or causing a stir," highlighting a persistent perception of risk that inhibits fully candid discourse online.

The Central Role of Communicative Leadership and Its Cultural Boundaries

The findings strongly identify the owner's communicative, warm, and supportive leadership style as the primary driver of the perceived open climate. His approachability, direct communication about the company's vision, and use of familial, casual language (e.g., "speaking like family") were consistently cited as fostering emotional attachment and a sense of responsibility among employees.

However, this leadership-driven openness operates within distinct cultural and structural boundaries:

The Persistence of Subtle Hierarchy: Despite a flat formal structure, an informal hierarchy based on seniority and social norms (sungkan) actively persists. This invisible hierarchy acts as the most significant barrier to authentic upward communication, particularly when it involves criticism or dissenting opinions from junior staff. It creates a gap between the leader's intent and the employees' willingness to engage fully.

Contextual Communication Switching: The organization demonstrates a mature ability for "contextual communication switching." While casual, familial communication is used to build relationships and motivation, a shift to a professional, task-oriented mode occurs when resolving problems or making decisions. As summarized in the findings, "constraints must be resolved professionally." This ability to navigate between relational warmth and professional boundaries is a key indicator of the climate's sophisticated, managed nature.

Systemic Ambiguity as a Critical Inhibitor to Climate and Productivity. The research identified critical systemic factors that undermine the open climate strategy, directly linking them to productivity outcomes. **Ambiguity in Roles and Rewards:** A significant finding was the ambiguity in the reward system and role clarity. Although a policy for rewarding innovation exists, the assessment process is perceived as non-transparent. Furthermore, some employees expressed confusion over authority boundaries and success metrics. This ambiguity damages the organizational climate dimensions of "reward" and "clarity," which are essential for motivation (Litwin & Stringer, 1968).

Direct Impact on Productivity: These inhibiting factors have a tangible effect on work efficiency. Employees who felt heard and aligned with the vision reported higher commitment—a driver of long-term productivity. Conversely, role ambiguity and unclear processes were found to cause time wastage through repeated coordination and work revisions, directly reducing operational efficiency. Thus, the open climate functions not as a direct cause of productivity, but as a mediating variable that influences it by enhancing motivational drivers and reducing systemic inefficiencies.

In conclusion, the climate at PT. Utero is not simply "open" or "closed." It is a strategically managed openness, carefully cultivated through leadership communication and hybrid channels, yet simultaneously constrained by unspoken cultural hierarchies and unresolved systemic ambiguities. The productivity outcomes are directly tied to how effectively this complex climate is navigated by both leadership and employees

5. Discussion

The integrated analysis demonstrates that PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia possesses a sophisticated, albeit complex, understanding of organizational communication as a climate-shaping tool. Instead of implementing isolated communication tactics, the management has constructed a relational ecosystem where formal policies and informal interactions work in concert—though not always seamlessly—to cultivate a sense of openness. This approach aligns with contemporary organizational theory that views climate not as a static condition but as a continuous communicative accomplishment (Ashforth, 1985), achieved through daily interactions.

1. The "Managed Openness" Framework and Its Theoretical Implications

The core finding of this research is the identification of a "managed openness" framework. This concept captures the deliberate yet bounded effort to foster transparency and participation. Theoretically, this extends Litwin & Stringer's (1968) classic climate dimensions by highlighting how they are actively negotiated and moderated in practice, particularly within a specific cultural context like Indonesia.

Communication as a Substitute for Power: The dominant use of casual, familial communication by leadership strongly embodies the principle of using communication as a substitute for formal authority (Deetz, 2001). This reduces psychological distance, fostering ownership and affective commitment among employees, as evidenced by increased reported responsibility.

The Dual Function of Informal Channels: The findings confirm and elaborate on the critical role of informal communication (Muhammad, 2014). At PT. Utero, informal channels (WhatsApp, casual chats) are not a shadow system but a legitimized and essential complement to formal ones. They personalize information,

accelerate coordination, and serve as the primary venue for innovative ideas. However, their dependence also reveals risks, such as the persistent lack of psychological safety for voicing disruptive criticism in digital groups, underscoring that not all informality equates to safety.

2. Navigating the Tension: Leadership, Culture, and Systemic Barriers

The effectiveness of the open climate strategy is directly mediated by the organization's ability to navigate inherent tensions.

Leadership as the Primary Architect and Limiting Factor: The owner's communicative style is the cornerstone of the perceived climate. However, this research reveals a critical nuance: leadership can initiate openness but cannot single-handedly guarantee its full realization if systemic and cultural barriers remain unaddressed. The persistence of a subtle hierarchy (*sungkan*, norms of seniority) acts as a powerful, informal counter-force that filters and restricts authentic upward communication.

The Cost of Ambiguity: A significant theoretical contribution is the clear link established between climate ambiguity (in rewards and roles) and tangible productivity loss. This finding moves beyond correlational assumptions to demonstrate the processual chain: ambiguous systems → reduced motivation and clarity → inefficiencies (rework, excessive coordination) → lowered productivity. This provides empirical support for the argument that psychological climate dimensions have direct operational consequences.

3. Strategic Lessons for the Creative Industry Context

These findings offer contextualized insights for creative enterprises like PT. Utero:

Beyond Policy to Practice: Success hinges not on drafting open-door policies but on curating everyday communicative practices that blend relational warmth with professional clarity. The observed "contextual switching" between casual and professional modes is a key practical skill.

The Imperative of Addressing the "Hidden Curriculum": For an open climate to flourish, organizations must proactively identify and mitigate their "hidden" cultural norms—like unspoken hierarchy—that silently undermine formal strategies. This requires more than leader intent; it demands structured opportunities for safe, anonymous feedback and a critical examination of decision-making patterns.

Sustainability through Authenticity and Consistency: The climate is built on fragile trust. Its sustainability depends entirely on the authenticity and consistency of leadership communication. Any perceived discrepancy between familial rhetoric and professional actions (e.g., in reward distribution) can rapidly erode the psychological safety the strategy aims to build.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that an open organizational climate in the Indonesian creative sector is best understood as a dynamic, communicatively managed construct. It is strategically initiated from the top through relational leadership and hybrid channels but is perpetually shaped and constrained by the interplay of informal culture and formal systems. The ultimate impact on productivity is mediated through this complex climate, which enhances commitment when successfully nurtured but introduces inefficiencies when its inherent tensions between openness and hierarchy, informality and structure, intention and practice are left unmanaged.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion presented in the preceding chapters, this research concludes that an intentionally implemented Open Organizational Climate serves as a crucial communication strategy at PT. Utero Kreatif Indonesia. It effectively cultivates the employee commitment and sense of responsibility that underpin sustained productivity. This climate is operationalized through a hybrid model of "Managed Openness," which strategically blends formal communication channels with a dominant culture of informal interaction. The success of this model, however, is not inherent to its structure but is fundamentally reliant on leadership that is communicative, approachable, and supportive, thereby minimizing psychological distance.

Nevertheless, the research identifies that the full potential of this open climate is significantly constrained. A persistent, subtle hierarchy rooted in seniority and social norms of deference (*sungkan*) curtails authentic upward communication. Concurrently, systemic ambiguities in role clarity and reward structures pose a threat to intrinsic motivation.

In essence, the Open Organizational Climate acts as a pivotal mediating variable. It indirectly enhances long-term productivity by fostering psychological safety and affective commitment. Conversely, the barriers to this climate, particularly role ambiguity, directly impede efficiency by creating coordination failures and work redundancies. Therefore, the ultimate efficacy of this communication meta-strategy hinges on the organization's dual capacity to nurture genuine, open dialogue while simultaneously and proactively addressing the underlying cultural and systemic obstacles that inhibit it.



Acknowledgments

-

References

1. Rosmawaty. (2010). *Mengenal Ilmu Komunikasi*. Jakarta: Widya Padjajaran.
2. Muhammad, A. (2014). *Komunikasi Organisasi*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
3. Purnomo, S. H., & Zulkifrimansyah. (1998). *Manajemen Strategi; Sebuah Konsep Pengantar*. Jakarta: Lembaga Penerbitan Fakultas Ekonomi UI.
4. Ahmad, A. (1997). *Strategi Belajar Mengajar*. Bandung: Pustaka Setia.
5. Steiner, G., & Minner, J. *Manajemen Strategik*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
6. Efendy, O. U. (2007). *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori dan Praktek*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
7. David, F. R. (2002). *Manajemen Strategi Dan Konsep*. Jakarta: Perhelalindo.
8. Pace, R. W., & Faules, D. F. (2006). *Komunikasi Organisasi: Strategi Meningkatkan Kinerja Perusahaan*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
9. Moeloeng, L. J. (2001). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
10. Gunawan, I. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori dan Praktik*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
11. Bungin, B. *Analisis Data Penelitian Kualitatif*. Jakarta: PT. Grafindo Persada.
12. Kriyantono, R. (2007). *Teknik Praktis Riset Komunikasi*. Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group.
13. Mulyana, D. (2001). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Rosda Karya.
14. Rakhmat, Jalaluddin. (2002). *Metode Penelitian Komunikasi*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
15. Hardjana, A. (2006). *Iklim Organisasi: Lingkungan Kerja Manusiawi*. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, No. 1.
16. Arofah, E. F. (2018). *Produktivitas Pengajar Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan*. *Jurnal Tawadhu*, No. 02.
17. Susanti, E. *Iklim Organisasi : Manfaatnya Bagi Organisasi*.
18. Lestari, N. P. (2016). *Strategi Komunikasi Dalam Meningkatkan Ketertiban Lalu Lintas pada Satlantas Polresta Kota Palembang*.
19. Ramadhani, A. (2022). *Strategi Komunikasi Organisasi dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi dan Semangat Kerja Karyawan Toyota Perintis*.
20. Thabroni, G. *Strategi Komunikasi: Pengertian, Jenis, Tujuan, Tahap, Prinsip, Dsb*. Retrieved from <https://serupa.id/strategi-komunikasi-pengertian-jenis-tujuan-tahap-prinsip-dsb/>
21. Rukmana, I. D. *Iklim Organisasi: Rahasia Bikin Karyawan Makin Betah*. Retrieved from <https://konsultanku.co.id/blog/iklim-organisasi-rahasia-bikin-karyawan-makin-betah>
22. Haromain. *Kajian Budaya Dan Iklim Dalam Organisasi Pendidikan*. Retrieved from <https://eJournal.Undikma.Ac.Id/Index.Php/Visionary/Article/Download/3003/2044>
23. Santoso, J. T. *Tiga Jenis Komunikasi Dalam Berbisnis*. Retrieved from <https://stekom.ac.id/artikel/3-jenis-komunikasi-dalam-berbisnis>
24. Sri Wahyuning, "Apa Itu Budaya Perusahaan," <https://komputerisasi-akuntansi-d3.stekom.ac.id/informasi/baca/APA-ITU-BUDAYA-PERUSAHAAN/5c286717fd814ca2a725f3f9601ac3f1901995e9>
25. <http://repository.poltekkesdenpasar.ac.id/7416/3/BAB%20II%20Tinjauan%20Pustaka.pdf>