The Influence of Leader's Refusal to Internet-based Communication on Communication Satisfaction

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Abstract:

New organizational investments in ICT tools have led companies to increase the use of Internet-based communication channels, nevertheless, some leaders still refuse to use them; hence, this study tests if the leader's refusal to communicate via Internet - based channels with employees has no influence on communication satisfaction; the sample consisted of 103 participants from Colombian organizations; a questionnaire and interviews were administered; subsequently, data was analyzed by using SPSS and Atlas Ti tools. The results concluded that the absence of internet-based communication channels in the organization does not affect communication satisfaction, and it was also observed that employees are willing to use traditional communication channels instead. The findings are important as a input for scholars who want to deepen the understanding of Internet-based communication channels and their effect on satisfaction communication; similarly, the results may assist organizations in redesigning organizational communication policies while they adapt to virtual work during the Covid19 outbreak.

Introduction

It is undeniable that ICT's have provided development and productivity solutions to the nations. The increasing use of technology coupled with the increase in efficiency derived from information technology has contributed to the

resurgence of productivity (Oliner & Sichel, 2002, p. 15). In some countries, productivity growth in recent years has occurred as a result of the expansion of the use of ICT's to sectors other than manufacturing (Chung, 2018, p. 88), thus, allowing the strengthening of GDP, and , in some cases, a positive impact on development (Njoh, 2018). Consequently, the expansion of the ICT's infrastructure has served as a driver in increasing productivity in all areas of the industry, reducing costs in labor and materials and increasing private capital (Nadiri, Nandi, & Akoz, 2018); Similarly, although on a larger scale for developed economies than for developing and emerging countries, investment in ICT has shown a positive relationship with their economic development during the first decade of the 21st century (Niebel, 2018).

Additionally, current health demands of the planet, which have forced organizations to use virtual work, are forcing organizations to actively participate in virtual communication; nevertheless, some leaders still refuse to change traditional channels of organizational communication; consequently, it is important to know whether the refusal to use modern internet-based communication channels affects communication satisfaction.

Literature review

Leadership

Trying to understand how different leaders, in all fields, have managed to motivate their followers throughout history has been a multidisciplinary topic that has gained great interest during the last decades (Yukl, 1989, p. 251).

It is a need to highlight that although many theoreticians agree on the existence of an influential process on the act of the leader, schools have deep differences in common, as who exerts the influence, or how, and why the influence is exerted. These deep differences generate serious discrepancies among academics in trying to identify the leader and the leadership processes; hence, there is little consensus among researchers to choose the phenomenon to investigate and the most convenient formula to interpret the results (Yukl, 1989, p. 254) .

The 20th century was a very fruitful period for the modern study of leadership. A large number of books and publications supported the study of the phenomenon (Yukl, 1989, pp. 251-252). Several schools made their ways, therefore, from different perspectives they approached to understand the subject, as a consequence, the literature review has allowed the classification of numerous contemporary schools of leadership (Antonakis & Day, 2018, p. 8).

Communication satisfaction

Defining Organizational communication has not been an easy task. For (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019, pp. 35-39), the difficulty to define organizational communication lies on the combination of two complex phenomena, communication and organization. To understand it, the authors extend the concept spectrum as a relationship where communication occurs in organizations. According to the authors, communication goes from being a descriptive phenomenon of the environment, to becoming a creator of realities; based on this

reasoning, the authors build what will be the definition of organizational communication to follow in this study: "the process of creating and negotiating collective, coordinated systems of meaning through symbolic practices oriented towards the achievement of organizational goals" (p. 37); subsequently, defining communication satisfaction is delimited by events related to the workplace, in this way, Redding (Communication within the organization, 1978, p. 429), defines the communication satisfaction as a general level of satisfaction linked to the employee's perception over the whole communication environment; in addition, (Downs & Hazen, 1977, pp. 66-69) extends the concept to a multidimensional model in which communication satisfaction is related to variables of climate, supervision, media quality, horizontal communication, organizational perspective, and subordination.

Hypothesis

Literature review suggests that the use of Internet-based communication channels have a positive impact on communication satisfaction; for instance, a research conducted on 303 people from 15 companies showed that instant messages had a positive impact on formal and informal communication satisfaction (Pi, Liu, Chen, & Li, 2008); likewise, a study conducted on sample of 68 tested hypotheses regarding the perception that virtual office workers and traditional office workers had about communication satisfaction. Results found that both virtual and traditional workers were satisfied with the communication; also, virtual employees feel higher satisfied with communication than traditional office workers, which means that communication satisfaction is higher when employees use Internet-based channels (Akkirman & Harris, 2005); similarly, a study conducted on employees, managers, and competent officials for development of organizational communication from different firms, in the Republic of Macedonia, concluded that face-to-face communication cannot be replaced by Internet-based communications, yet the use of social networks increases job satisfaction (Siljanovska, 2015). In contrast, a Serbian study concluded that the use communication technology in terms of social networking tools has no influence on communication satisfaction (Lalic, Marjanovic, & Lalic, 2012), which may imply that the absence of Internet-based communication in the organization would not affect communication satisfaction.

According to the previous results, the following hypothesis emerges:

Leader's refusal to communicate via Internet-based channels with employees has no influence on communication satisfaction.

Methodology

Sample

Four Colombian small and medium size enterprises from the service industry took part in the research. The simple random sampling technique was applied in every stratum to make sure that every organization had an identical proportion of involvement in the sampling process. As a result, the total sample was 103. Subsequently, to select the participants, employees were distributed by strata, then, all employees were organized in alphabetical order according to their last names on the database, once organized, each one was given a number.

Subsequently, for stratum 1, one (1) was the first person, and 37 was the last one; for stratum 2, 1 was the first person, and 31 was the last one; for stratum 3, 1 was the first person, and 16 was the last one; finally, for stratum 4, 1 was the first person, and 27 was the last one; then, a random number generator tool (CalculatorSoup, LLC, 2019) was used to generate random numbers from the list of each stratum.

Procedure

A sociodemographic questionnaire and the Internet-Based Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire were administered, next, IBM SPSS Statistics 22 was used to observe descriptive statistics, after that, semi structured interviews were performed, and the data were analyzed on Atlas Ti. (version 8.0).

Results

Sociodemographic results found Internet-based communication represents 64.5% of total communication; this proportion is enough to contemplate that Internet-based channel have a considerable impact organizational communication.

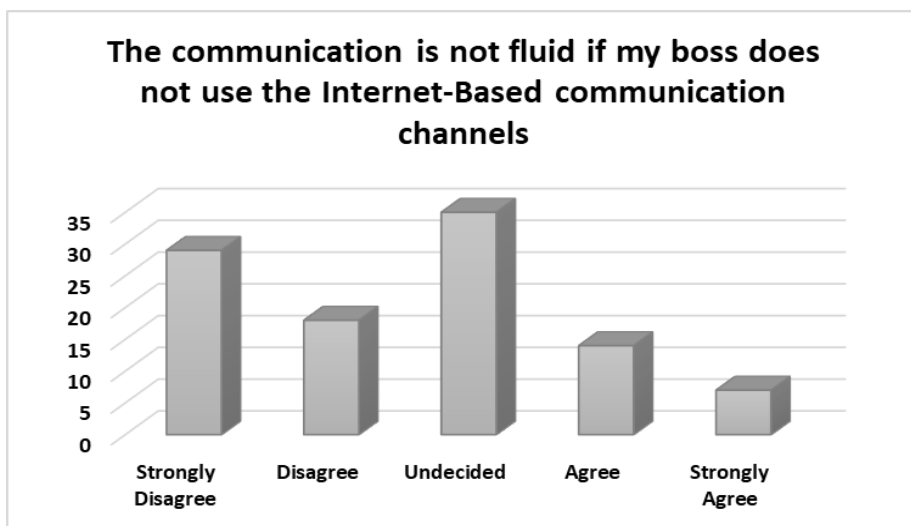*Internet-Based Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire results*

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics H4

ITEMS	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The communication is not fluid if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels.	103	1.0	5.0	2.534	1.2273
2. The information is not clear if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels.	103	1.0	5.0	2.282	1.0794
3. The tasks are difficult for me if my boss does not feed back to me via Internet-based communication channels.	103	1.0	5.0	2.087	1.2296
4. The fulfillment of goals is delayed if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels.	103	1.0	5.0	2.417	1.3025
5. The relationship with my colleagues is not pleasant if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels.	103	1.0	5.0	1.883	1.0600

Grand Mean: 2.24

1. The communication is not fluid if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels

The descriptive statistical analysis (M = 2.5; SD = 1.2) shows that 29% of respondents completely disagree with this proposition and 18% disagree, while 25% are neutral. Likewise, 14% agree and 7% agree completely, hence, it can be concluded that the Internet-based communication with the boss would not be necessary to have a fluid communication.

Graph 1: Communication fluency

2. The information is not clear if my boss does not use Internet-Based communication channels.

Regarding the clarity of the information under the absence of Internet-based communication channels (M = 2.3; SD = 1.1), it can be observed that 29% completely agree and 32% agree, 30% are neutral, 8% agree and 4% totally agree. 61% represents a significant indicator to conclude that for most participants the absence of Internet-based communication channels to provide information by the boss did not affect the clarity of the message.
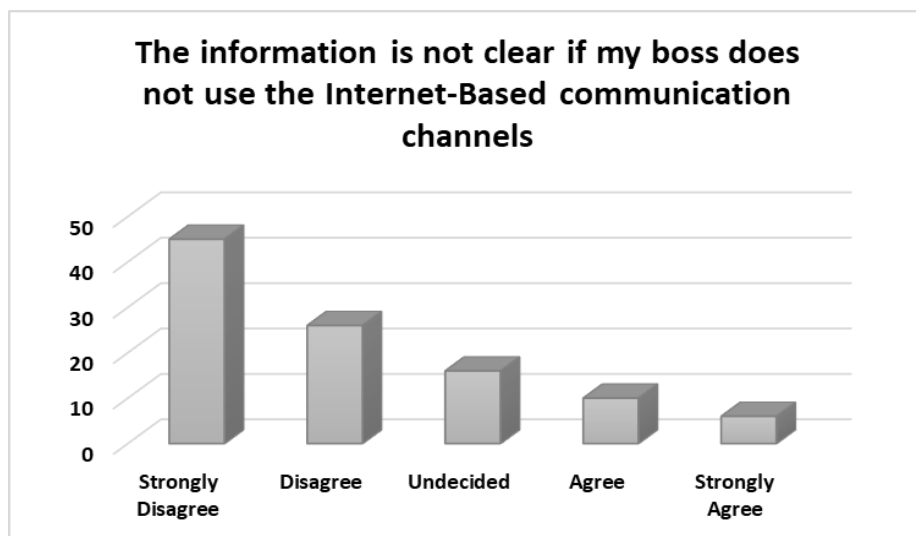
Graph 2: Communication clarity

3. The tasks are difficult for me if my boss does not feed back to me through Internet-Based communication channels.

When observing the perception that employees have about the difficulty that could be generated to perform tasks when the boss does not use Internet-based communication channels, it was obtained that 45% completely disagree, 26% disagree, 16% are neutral, 10% agree and 6% completely agree (M = 2.1; SD = 1.2). As a result, it is evident that a large majority of participants do not require Internet-Based tools to receive feedback from the boss to fulfill their tasks.

The tasks are difficult for me if my boss does not feed back to me via Internet-Based communication channels
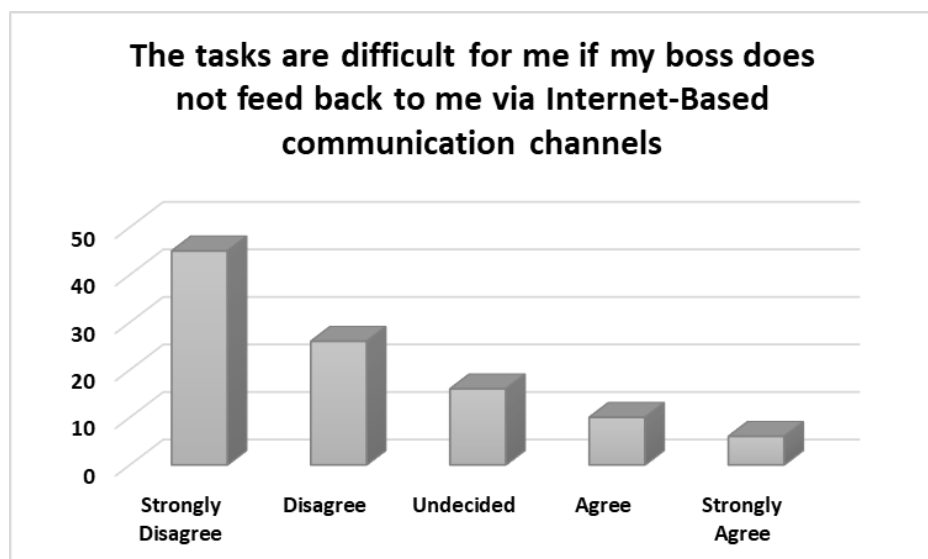
Graph 3: Feedback

4. The fulfillment of goals is delayed if my boss does not use Internet-based communication channels.

Regarding the fulfillment of goals, (M = 2.4; SD = 1.3) 33% completely disagree, 27% disagree, 18% remain neutral, 17% agree, 8% completely agree. Thus, it could be observed that most respondents expressed that fulfillment of organizational goals was not delayed due to the lack of use of Internet-based communication channels by the boss.

The fulfillment of the goals is delayed if my boss does not use the Internet-Based communication channels
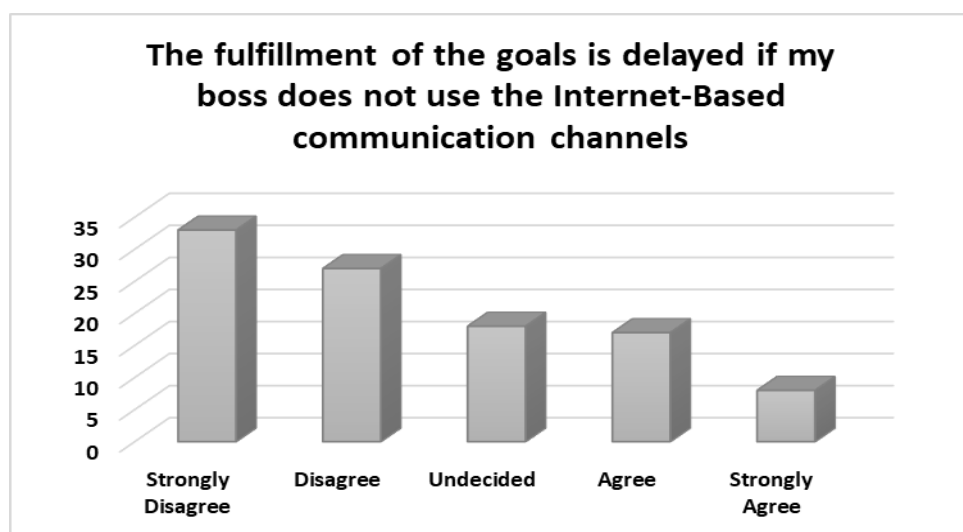
Graph 4: Fulfillment of goals

5. The relationship with my colleagues is not pleasant if my boss does not use Internet-Based communication channels.

On this issue, (M=1.9; SD=1.1) 51% completely disagree, 24% disagree, 19% are neutral, while 7% agree, and 2% completely disagree. The responses show that the most employees feel the lack of use of Internet-Based channels by the boss to communicate does not represent a risk against the relationship with colleagues.
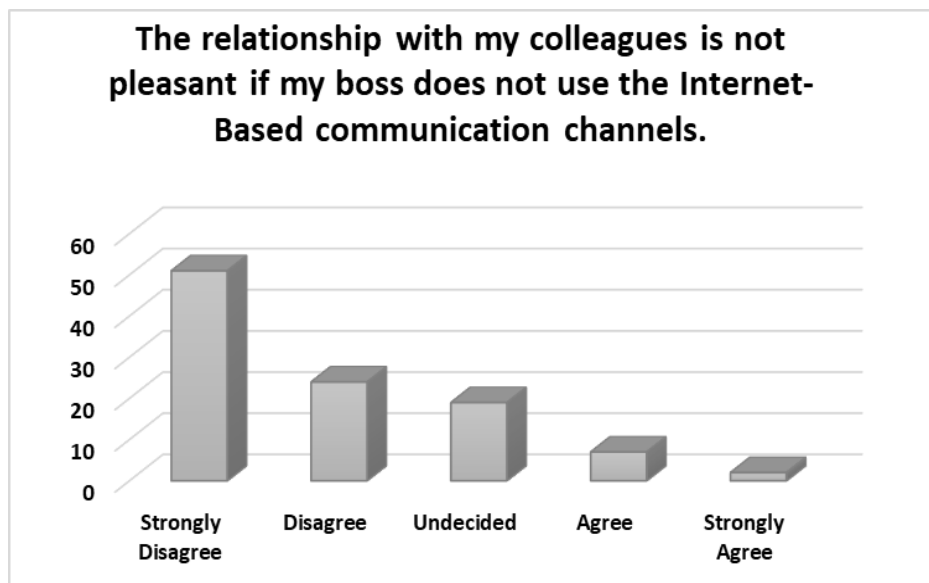
Graph 5: Relationship with colleagues

Assumption

By observing the responses obtained, it can be clearly evidenced that the relationships between colleagues within the work environment, the scope of organizational goals, the clarity of the information shared with the boss, and the messages sent by the boss for the fulfillment of the task, are not affected when the boss communicates via non- Internet-Based channels. Likewise, it may be inferred that the fluency of the messages is not perceived to be affected when the communication between the boss and the employees is carried out without the intervention of the Internet-Based channels.

Final score

The final score is 2 (Disagree).

Table 2: Final score

| 2	Disagree	Employees perceive that the absence of Internet-Based communication by the boss does not affect communication satisfaction

Interview

The following schemes show the description of the findings. The codes and the quotations that support them will be displayed. The numbers in parentheses, within the wording, refer to the number of quotations or testimonials of the interviewees, a single interviewee can answer different options, so the sum of quotations does not correspond to the totality of the interviewees in some response segments.
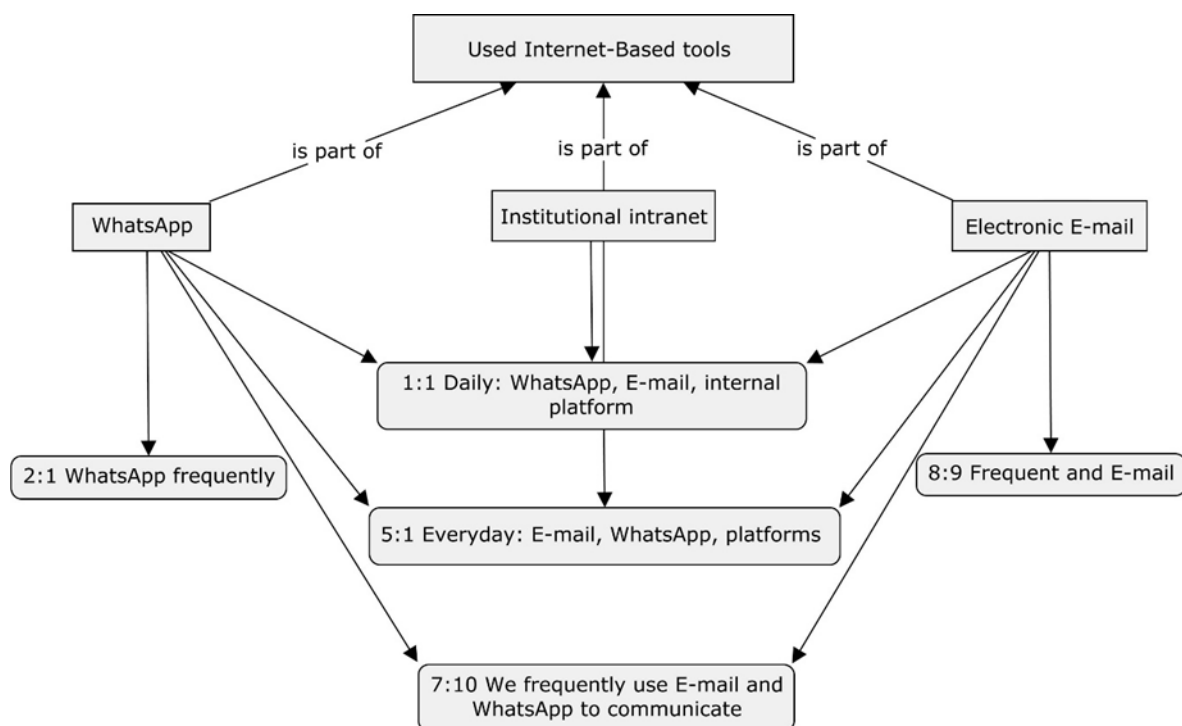
1. How often do you use Internet-based tools when communicating with your boss? (email, institutional Intranet, social networks such as Messenger, WhatsApp, Viper, among others)

Most of the interviewees communicate with the boss by Internet-based channels "frequently" or several times a week (9). Only one respondent replied that they communicate by Internet-based channels very "No frequently" as seen in scheme 1. Likewise, they responded the most frequent Internet-based tools of communication were email (4), WhatsApp (4) and networks as an institutional intranet (2), see scheme 2.

Findings also show how Internet-based channels are frequently and constantly used in the workspace. The use of WhatsApp indicates that there is an openness to direct and informal ways of communication with the boss; however, the use of email and institutional platforms are considered as formal channels of communication.
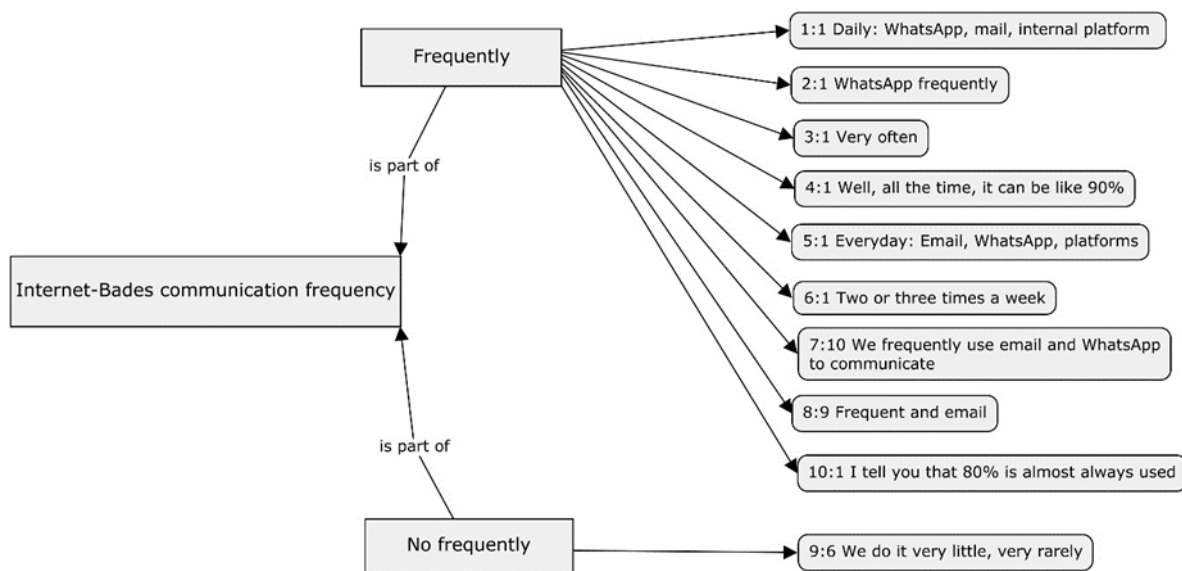
Scheme 1: Frequency of Internet-based communication with the boss

Scheme 2: Type of Internet-based tools used

What do you use it with the boss for?

According to respondents, there are different purposes to use Internet-based communication, for instance, problem solving (3) such as clearing doubts, answering, and asking questions or receiving instructions about the job. Similarly, notify and report (4), specifically, urgent information, news reports, and saying what is required in a timely manner.

Speed is also an important element in the purposes of Internet-based communication (5), respondents suggest that it generates more agility to deal with internal matters, facilitates work, and makes it faster. Finally, most of interviewees agree that this type of communication is useful to keep records to generate evidence and keep support for the actions carried out in the workspace (7), for them, the chance to record information is a type of guarantee and safeguard which allows them to clarify doubts and have specific guidelines regarding the work they can visualize at the required time.

Therefore, it can be stated that the Internet-based communication is important as long as it informs about required actions, in the workspace, that need to be supported in formal and informal ways to generate a greater clarity. It does not mean that Internet-based communication acts as a retainer of all work processes, rather, it serves as an alternative channel that provides support and helps accelerate them. In this regard, scheme 3 shows that speed and evidence are predominant answers.

This question about the purpose is connected to the question about the need for Internet-based communication by the boss in scheme 10, which also shares the previous answers on the evidence, the speed and, additionally, clear instructions, specifically, the need of feedback, giving instructions, and defining priorities.
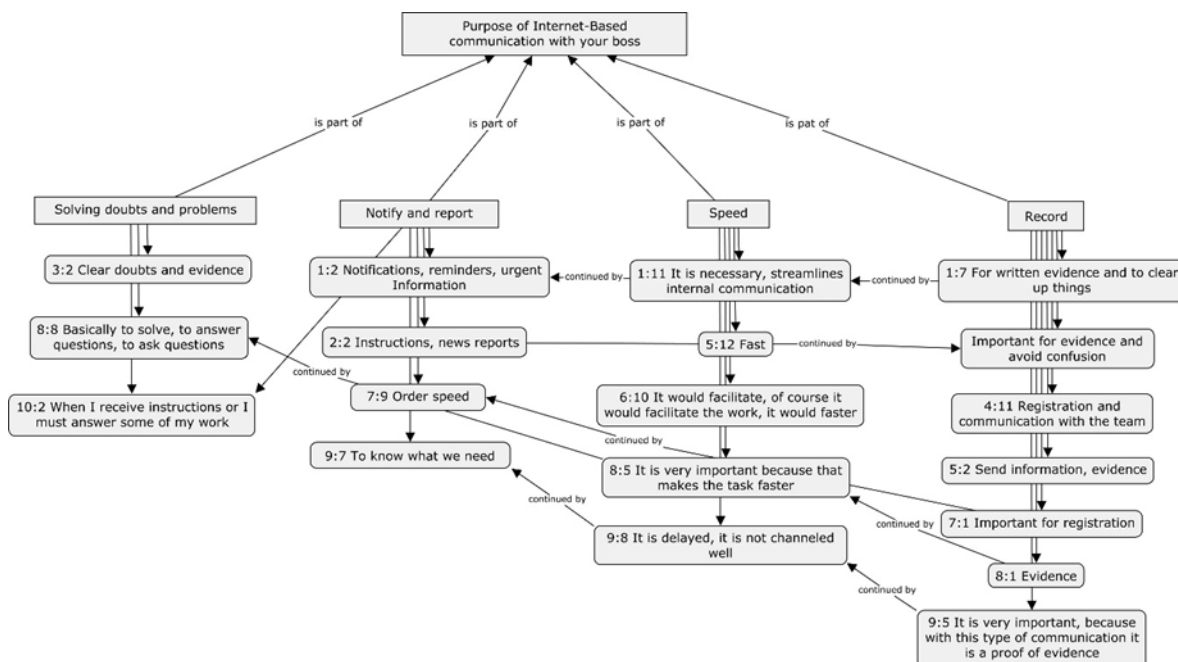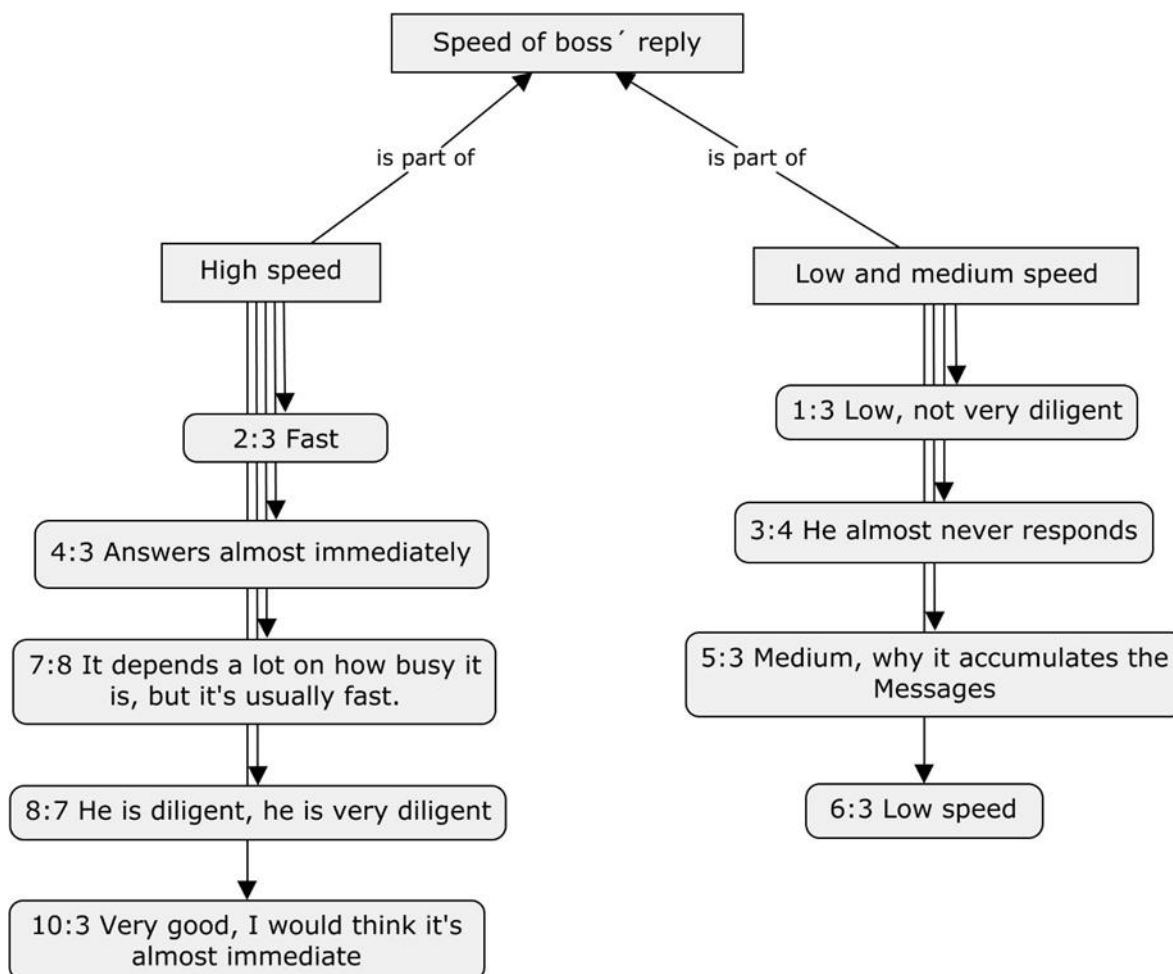
Scheme 3: Purpose of Internet-based communication with the boss

3. How do you perceive the speed of response of your boss via Internet-based communication channels for the fulfillment of the task? Diligence, Delay, Not responding.

Regarding the speed the boss communicates via Internet-based communication, it is found that half of interviewees say that the speed is high (5); that is, it is fast, immediate, and diligent.

On the contrary, other interviewees (4) state that the speed is low and medium, not very diligent, the messages accumulate, or the boss never responds to them. It leads to state that although, in the previous question about the purpose, the speed generated by Internet-based communication was highlighted, it is not fulfilled for the totality of the interviewees, specifically in relation to the boss's level of response; that is, the employee can send messages in an agile and frequent manner, but he or she does not, necessarily, receive immediate response. Access to Internet-based communication does not guarantee its effectiveness.

Scheme 4: Response speed of Internet-based communication by the boss

4. How is the quality of the messages that your boss sends you via Internet-based channels?

Regarding the quality of messages, more than half of interviewees (6) answer that messages are concise and clear, 3 participants say they are confusing and incomplete (3), and one participant says they are short. It can be directly related to the Internet-based tools selected to carry out the communication; to illustrate, in the case of WhatsApp, the messages are usually accurate, so communication is direct and timely, also, frequently, if communication is performed on a daily basis, its purpose is very specific and concrete for the execution of tasks; nevertheless, when messages are short, they may lack of clarity. If it is observed that almost half (4) of interviewees state that messages are confusing, incomplete and short, it indicates that Internet-based communication is not effective per se, nor does it provide clarity just because the organization has chosen that way as a medium of communication.
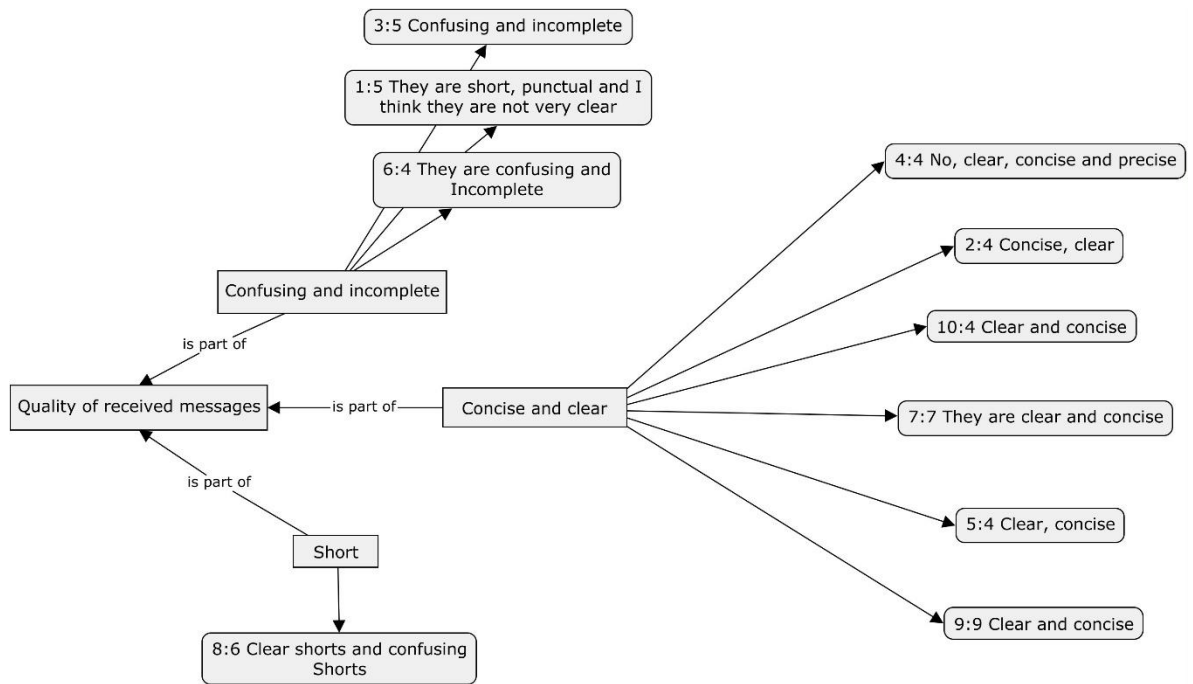
Scheme 5: Quality of the messages received from the boss

5. How important is it that your boss communicates via Internet-based communication channels for the satisfactory fulfillment of your task? Why?

Some of the answers given by participants agree on responses from previous questions; that is, record (7), speed (5) and clear instructions (5) are considered important for the fulfillment of daily tasks by interviewees. Just a person thinks that it is not directly important.
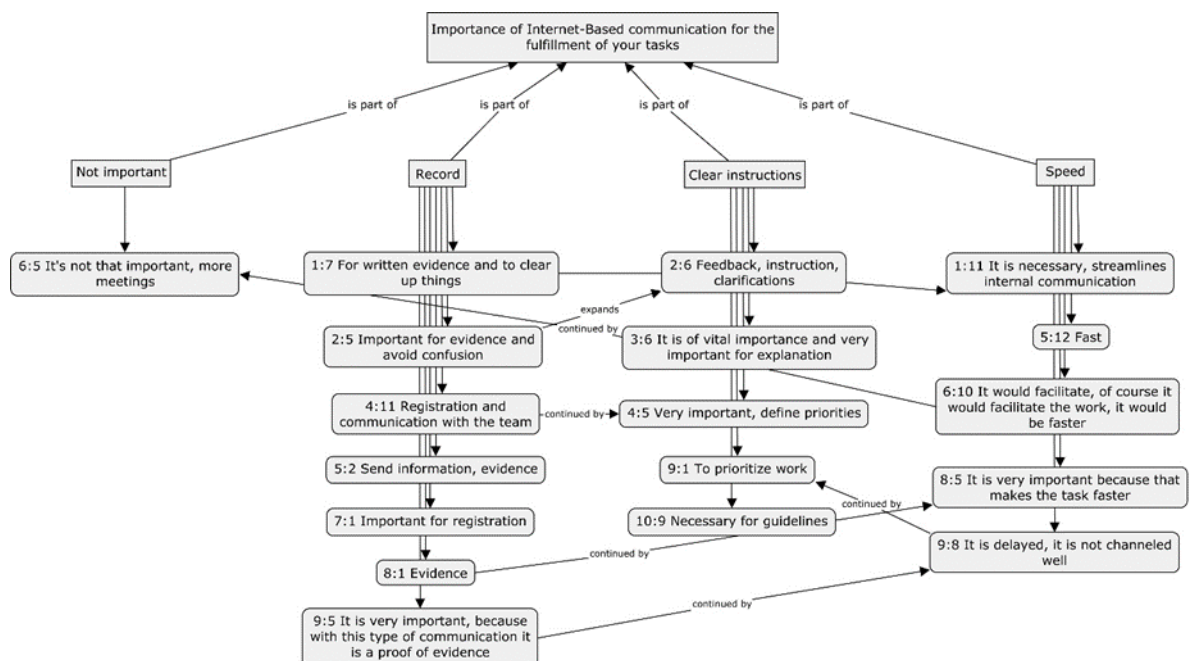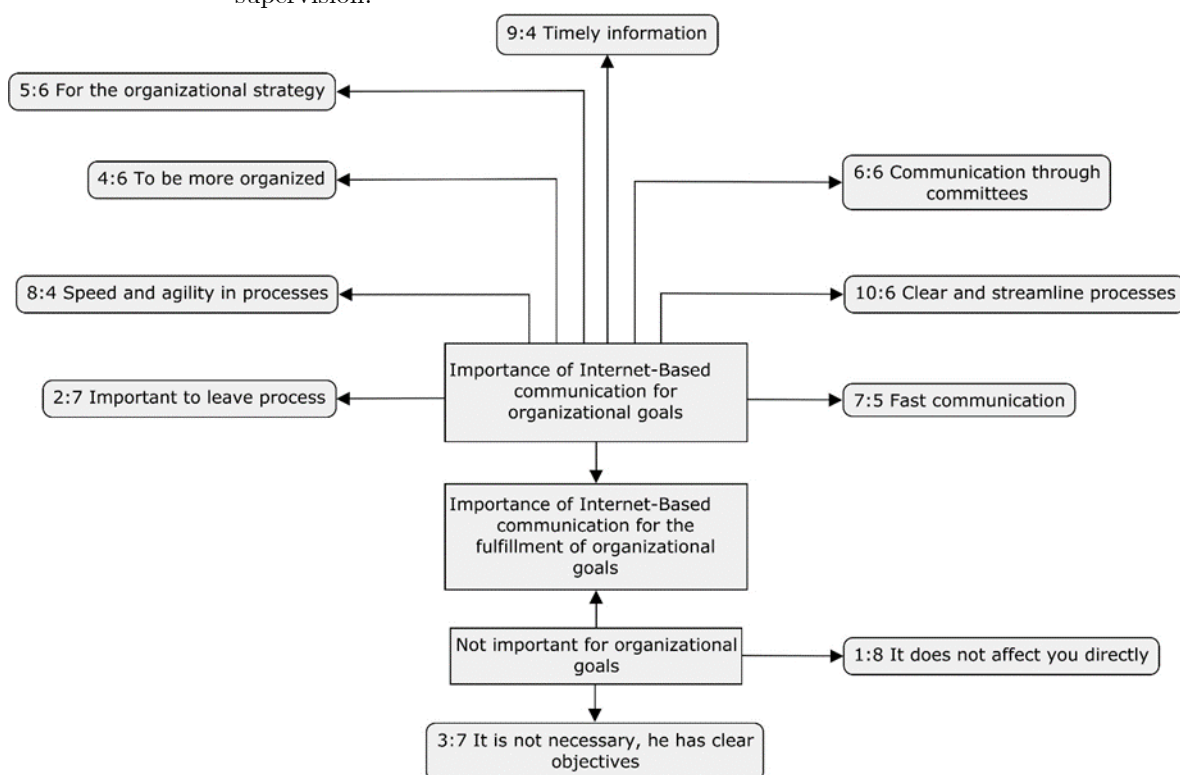

Scheme 6: Importance of Internet-based communication for the fulfillment of tasks

6. How important is it that your boss communicates with you via Internet-based communication channels to achieve organizational goals? Why?

Interviewees (8) specify that Internet-based communication with the boss is important for the achievement of organizational goals for various reasons; on the one hand, they affirm that it helps processes to be more agile, timely, more organized, and with a greater proof of evidence; on the other hand, they think it is important for the development of the organizational strategy and communication through different committees.

However, two interviewees think Internet-Based communication is not important at this issue. It may arise because they find other ways such as meetings, face-to-face communication, and independent work, without direct supervision.


Scheme 7: Importance of Internet-based communication for the fulfillment of organizational goals

7. Does the Internet-Based communication by your boss impact your relationship with your colleagues? How?

Half of interviewees say that Internet-based communication with the boss impacts the relationship with their colleagues or co-workers; they argue that the absence of Internet-based communication by their boss can delay the work process; similarly, they think that when the boss does not interact with them through Internet-based channels, interviewees become the link between the boss and their colleagues, to give instructions, or to impact decision making.

In contrast, the other half states that the Internet-based communication by their boss does not impact the relationship with their colleagues or co-workers since they use other channels. See scheme 9. Consequently, it can be concluded that the Internet-based communication is an alternative way to organizational communication such as face-to-face meetings.
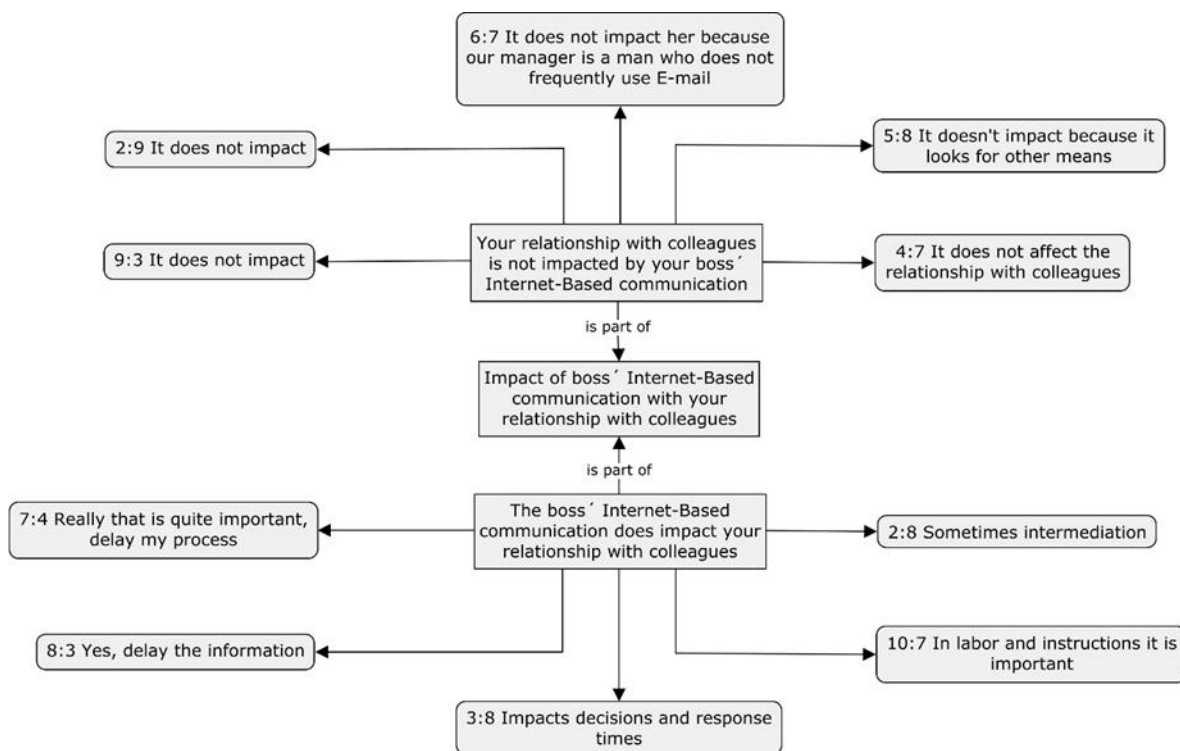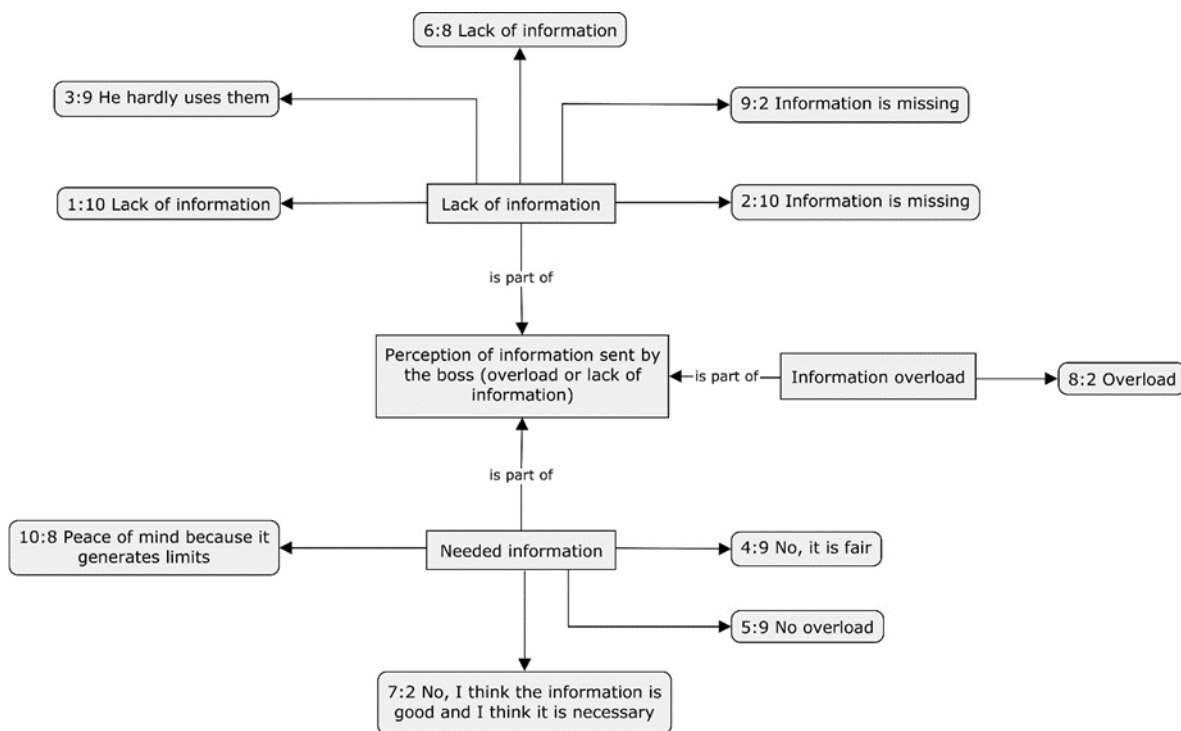
Scheme 8: Impact of boss' Internet-based communication and the relationship with colleagues

8. Do you consider that there is an overload or lack of electronic information by the boss? How does it affect you?

Half of respondents agree on the fact that there is an absence of information; on the contrary, less than half states that they receive the necessary information (4), and one interviewed perceives information overload.

Additionally, on the one hand, it can be observed that Internet-based communication does not generate the information required for decision making, or actions at work for all respondents. In this respect, other channels of communication with the boss are used. On the other hand, the use of Internet-based channels is often difficult for many of them and, therefore, it may not be the appropriate way to establish the flow of communication with employees.

Scheme 9: Perception of the information sent by the boss

9. Do you feel that the Internet-based communication by your boss in the organization is necessary? Why?

As noted, there are different questions that show equivalent answers; specifically, the questions regarding the purpose, the importance, and the need for Internet-based communication with the boss share the speed (7), proof of evidence (5) as answers. For this question, regarding the need for the Internet-based communication, clear instructions is additionally answered (5).
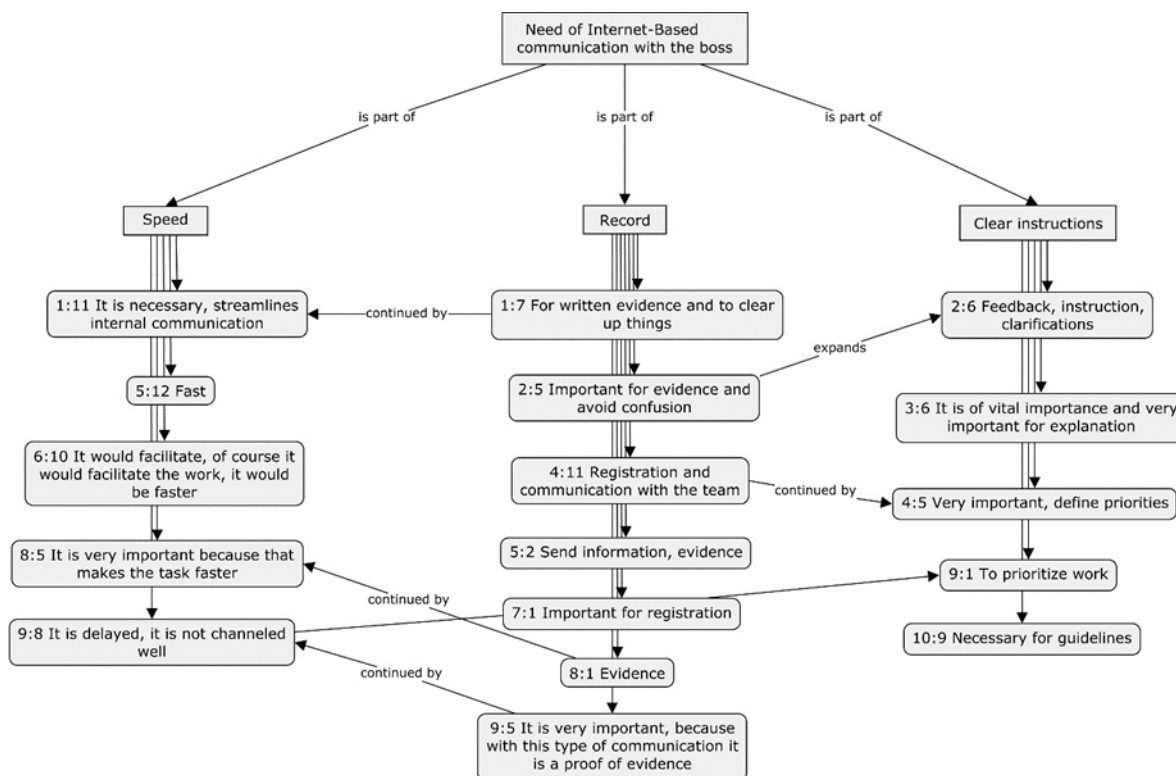
Scheme 10: Need of Internet-based communication with the boss

Assumption

In the findings described above, it is observed that the Internet-based communication process among interviewees and their boss is considered an important channel in the fulfillment of their tasks, organizational goals, and work environment; however, it can be seen as an alternative channel to speed it up, or keep it as a proof of evidence, rather than a determinant way to impact or improve tasks. In addition, the absence of Internet-based communication does not prevent the fulfillment of the tasks or the achievement of goals; in fact, it is confirmed that, although Internet-based channel exists, the communication is not satisfactory in its entirety; as a consequence, some limitations such as the absence of information and lack of clarity are overcome through other ways such as meetings in person or face-to-face conversations; that is, Internet-based communication is considered important, but when it fails or is not used, other non-Internet-based mediums come in handy.

In conclusion, the absence of Internet-based communication channels does not influence the communication satisfaction; therefore, the hypothesis Leader's refusal to communicate via Internet-based channels with employees has no influence on communication satisfaction is accepted.

Discussion

Results of the current study do not validate the findings carried out by (Pi, Liu, Chen, & Li, 2008), (Akkirman & Harris, 2005), and (Siljanovska, 2015), who tested that the use of Internet-based tools in communication channels influence communication satisfaction. On the contrary, findings validate the results by

(Lalic, Marjanovic, & Lalic, 2012), it is to say, when leaders of the organizations do not use the social network tools to communicate, employees perceive that it does not influence the communication satisfaction.

An important finding in this study tested that factors related to communication satisfaction in organizations, such as the clarity and fluency of the message, the relationships within members of the organization, the fulfillment of organizational goals and tasks, are not influenced by the absence of internet-based tools; the finding implies that employees and leaders use channels differently from Internet-based ones such as face-to-face meetings, meetings in persons, or phone calls to communicate the guidelines, argue their difficulties, give feedback, or clarify doubts in the organizational context; finally, when observing the results, although participants perceived that the absence of internet-based channels does not affect communication satisfaction, it can be inferred that employees from SME in Colombia recognize the importance of using Internet-based tools as resources for organizational communication.

As a consequence of the observation and analysis of the findings, it is concluded that the leader's refusal to communicate via Internet-based communication with employees have no influence on communication satisfaction.

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