A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG COLLEAGUES: NEEDS, IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

As a process of sharing ideas and emotions verbally and nonverbally, interpersonal communication allows to interact with and understand others in personal and professional lives. The current trends of virtual communication through cell phones and social media among employees seldom bring the indented effect and limit the problem solving. To bridge this gap, this paper explores and critically analyses the interpersonal communication emphasizing its concepts, methods, need, importance and challenges. It plays an important role in employee satisfaction, motivation, collaboration and business success. The effective interpersonal communication in the workplace also makes operations more efficient and the teamwork not only possible but also easier.

Key Words: *Interpersonal communication, colleagues and workplace communication, business relations, teamwork*

I. Introduction

Interpersonal communication is the sending and receiving of information between two or more people. Interpersonal communication in the workplace also involves this interaction in varying relational situations, such as between co-workers and between superiors and subordinates. Interpersonal communication in the workplace plays an important role in employee satisfaction, motivation, collaboration and business success. Now a day's humans are limiting their communication within a short boundary of a cell phone and social media. Today's modern employees are not willing to share their difficulties with colleagues, but they like share it on social media and with friends, but the problems are not getting solved. This paper emphasizes on concepts, methods, need, importance and challenges of interpersonal communication. Therefore there is a need to create awareness among workers about interpersonal communication among colleagues to make tension free problem solving and goal achievement.

II. Objectives of the Study

- To study concepts of interpersonal communication
- To know the need and importance of interpersonal communication in the workplace
- To study factors that hinder interpersonal communication among colleagues
- To know the outcome of proper interpersonal communication in workplace

III. Review of Literature

Exploring the literature on Interpersonal Communication, there were a few studies conducted under the title of interpersonal communication, which marked the beginning of the field of interpersonal communication. The usage of the term communication demonstrated that it indeed played a significant role in human behavior (Health &Bryant, 2000). The 1960s research studies influenced the development of the interpersonal field of communication. The studies of personality and its influence on relationships revealed that many psychiatric problems are due to interpersonal relations as well as self-problem (Segrin and Flora, 2000). Studies in humanistic psychology conceptualized that relationships could be improved through effective communication (Gable &Shean, 2000). Initially, interpersonal research focused on persuasion, social influence, and small group processes (Berger, 2005). Persuasion is one way those leaders influence teacher's attitudes, ideas, and behaviors. The principal as a persuasive communicator employs credibility, expertise, trustworthiness. Here, the principal may deliver a variety of degrees of reasons in his or her message. For example, he or she may deliver a message of fear, or comfort. The audience that receives the message is of a variety of demographics and personality traits. The principal normally chooses his or her best method of communication such as email, face-to-face or the printed word. Social influence is so tied to interpersonal communications in those people's thoughts, feelings, as well as behaviors affect others. Group processes are the way people interact and influence each other in a group setting. Principals employ groups to improve decision-

making. The studies of Kurt Lewin (1939), the father of modern Social Psychology, influenced the emerging field of interpersonal communication. He proposed that an individual's environment had much to do with an individual's behavior. He also developed theories of individual personalities and interpersonal conflicts. The early research studies of Festinger (1959), Heider (1958), and Hovland (1953) were a direct impact from Lewin.

These three researchers studied under the tutelage of Lewin and further extended his work. Festinger became the father of cognitive dissonance theory that leads to a change in attitude and behavior. Heider explored the nature of interpersonal communications and developed the attribution theory. He also published The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations that was a major breakthrough in the field (Heath & Bryant, 2000). This is explained by the means in which people attribute the behavior of others. For example, a person may give because he or she is pressured to give. Hovland used his knowledge of applied psychology learned from Lewin to explore interpersonal communication process.

The 1970s accompanied in a change in focus into the domain of social interactions, relational development, and relational control (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978). Shannon and Weaver (1949) developed a mathematical theory called information theory of communication that led Berger's Uncertainty Reduction Theory. Berger and Calabrese (1975) have been accredited with the Uncertainty Reduction Theory that paved the way for interpersonal communication. The Uncertainty Reduction Theory is defined as the numerous ways in which an interaction may behave in a given situation. The greater the level of uncertainty in a relationship decreases the chance of predicting behaviors and occurrences.

The 1980s was the period of cognitive approaches to interpersonal communication. The work of Knapp (1984), Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) helped mold interpersonal communication as it is known today. Because of their research efforts, interpersonal communication not only focuses on language, social cognition, and social psychology, but also interpersonal communication focuses on dynamic communication (Elfenvein, Foo, Boldry, and Tan, 2006), face-to-face-interaction (Kikoski, 1998) or as a communication to develop others (Bennis, 1999 and Nuttall, 2004)

The importance of Interpersonal Communication Skills is within every human being, there is a need to interact with others (Affi & Guerrero, 2000). The need to communicate satisfies the building of social bonds (Leary, 2001). For example, by observing our early ancestors who lived in groups to survive, he hypothesized that those who lived in groups were more likely to survive than those who lived alone. Coover and Murphy (2000) interjected that self develops identity through interaction engaging in effective communication contributes to a healthy emotional state (Gable & Shean, 2000). In line with the same thinking, when one engages in communication that is not meaningful, the result is usually loneliness, unhappiness, and depression (William and Zadiro, 2001).
Individuals with strong interpersonal communication skills cope better with stress, handle major life transitions, and are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety (Segrin and Flora, 2000). Those who are skilled in interaction are resilient to down falls in life (Segrin, 2000). In light of these research findings, training is now

being offered for many organizations (Argyle, 1999). Successful managers are equated with having good interpersonal communication skills (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). Entrepreneurs who possess good interpersonal communication skills have advantages in obtaining funding, establishing a positive relationship with customers, and securing quality employees (Baron & Markman, 2000).

IV. Research Methodology

In this study descriptive research design is used. The main purposes of descriptive studies can be explained as describing, explaining and validating research findings. Descriptive research is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject than the "why" of the research subject. The descriptive research method primarily focuses on describing the nature of a demographic segment, without focusing on "why" a particular phenomenon occurs. In other words, it "describes" the subject of the research without covering "why" it happens.

V. Concepts of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchange of information, ideas and feelings between two or more people through verbal or non-verbal methods. It includes face-to-face communication, in a form of voice, facial expressions, body language and gestures. The level of one's interpersonal communication skills is measured through the effectiveness of transferring messages to others. The commonly used interpersonal communications within an organization are internal employee communication for problem solving, company meetings, employee performance reviews and project discussions. Nowadays various online mediums are used for interpersonal communications in the workplace.

Types of interpersonal communication

1. Oral Communication
Oral communication is the exchange of information and ideas through the spoken word. It can be direct in person in a face-to-face interaction or through an electronic device. Using words, tone of voice, language, pronunciation are important in oral communication.

2. Written Communication
Written communication includes words and symbols that are typed or hand written in paper or in any electronic medium.

3. Nonverbal Communication
Nonverbal communication includes any communication that does not use words: hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, body posture, clothing and even the objects on your desk are conveying a message to your audience.

4. Listening
Listening means hearing with attention, for an effective communication we must have good listening capacity to understand what the other is expressed.

Elements of Interpersonal Communication in work place

The communicators
The term communicator refers to both the sender of the information as well as the receiver.

The message
Message means information to be shared. (News, advice, request, or suggestion)

Context
Whether a message is received and interpreted correctly depends mostly on the context. Therefore, interpersonal communication is contextual. Context is the environmental factors that influence the outcomes of communication.

These include time and place, as well as factors like family relationships, gender, culture, personal interest and the environment

Channel
A message is sent and received through a specific channel, or medium.

Besides face-to-face communication, some of the most common communication channels used in the workplace include emails, Whatsapp and chatting networks.

Feedback
Feedback is the response of the receiver. Feedback is important because it allows the sender to know whether the message has been received and interpreted correctly.

Need and importance of interpersonal communication in organization's

Family approach
The workplace is considered as a second family for every human being because persons spend much time with colleagues. Good interpersonal communication is the main factor which gives a family approach to the work place

Trust
To work as a team, there is a need for trust among colleagues. Open communication is an essential factor in building trust among persons. Good interpersonal communication can bring this openness among colleagues, and it leads to trust.

Change management
Interpersonal communication is very important during the change management process in organizations. Effective employee communication helps employees better understand the change, align with it and collaboratively work towards implementing the change successfully.

Company culture
When employees possess good interpersonal communication, organizational culture becomes more synergetic and positive in employee productivity.

Employee recognition
Good interpersonal communication drives more employee recognition with each other and their managers, they are more likely to recognize each others' good work and give constructive feedback.

Problem solving
Interpersonal communication is necessary in problem solving in the workplace because only when people discuss problems and weigh the pros and cons of alternatives, then they can come up with the final solution.

Alignment with business goals
Poor interpersonal communication between a superior and a subordinate can harm the business in many ways. When managers are unable to clearly communicate tasks, workers can quickly become frustrated and disconnected with the business goals.

Avoiding workplace miscommunication
When there is proper interpersonal communication in an open manner, everyone in the organization feels like they can speak openly with others. It will help to reduce workplace miscommunication, gossip and rumors in the organization.

Personal relationships
Interpersonal communication is extremely important for creating and maintaining meaningful personal relationships in the workplace. People with good interpersonal communication skills can, therefore, build healthy relationships with their colleagues and work much better as a team.

Solving Conflict in work place
When conflicts arise, interpersonal communication becomes crucial for resolving them.

Conflict management cannot happen without effective interpersonal communication. In fact, all conflict management strategies that use communication to soften situations in stressful environments are much more successful.

Career development and promotion
Continuous improvements of interpersonal communication skills can bring career progressions for many employees, and it will help them in getting managerial promotion.

To manage unexpected situation
Interpersonal communication is necessary to manage certain unexpected situation like strike and natural calamity. when employees are connected and have the ability to collaborate efficiently, it is much easier for organizations to function in a proper way.

Factors hinder interpersonal communication among colleagues

Dissatisfaction or Disinterest with One's Job
If a person is unhappy or has lost interest in his or her job, he or she will communicate very little. Because his or her mindset is always regarding things about leaving the organization, at that time, he or she will not communicate with open heart with colleagues.

Inability to Listen to Others
Active listening is an important aspect of effective communication. If a person is not listening to others, he or she can't make a perfect communication. It may be because of his or her perceptions, hearing disability, language problem and personal problems with colleagues.

Noise
Noise refers to the gap between the message that is received and what it is sent. Examples of noise include jargon, language barriers, inattention and more. Noise is the problem that many companies face in the workplace, and the reason why internal communicators are struggling to get the necessary employees' attention.

Lack of Trust in colleagues

If a person loses his or her trust in colleagues, it is extremely difficult to communicate anything with them. Without trust, no one will share any matter with others because there is a chance for leaking information.

Difference Communication Styles

Everyone has their own communication style. When person's communication style is different from colleagues, he automatically starts to avoid communication with others in the workplace, it will lead to isolation of that person.

Conflicts in the Workplace

Conflict can happen for a variety of reasons among colleagues, and it becomes a barrier to effective interpersonal communication. What is important is working to resolve the conflict. When the conflict is not solved, it grows, and then people begin to take a side, which further impedes effective communication in the work place.

Cultural Differences & Language

An organization will have workers from many countries from different cultural and language backgrounds, and when there are no common standards established in workplace, it will lead to more problems. No one will understand what others try to communicate and this often leads to misunderstanding and lack of cooperation among colleagues.

Generational Differences

Interpersonal communication can be complicated by generational differences in speech, dress, values, priorities and preferences. For instance, there may be a generational divide as to how team members prefer to communicate with one another. If younger workers sit in cubicles, using social networking as their primary channel of communication, it can alienate them from older workers who may prefer face-to-face communication.

Attitude of colleagues

Colleagues may differ in many aspects. Some time certain attitude of a colleague hinters or prevents others from making proper communication because there is a chance for making rumors and personally tampering with others' lives.

Result of proper interpersonal communication in workplace

When there is interpersonal communication in the workplace among colleagues, they feel connected and together at work. Strong interpersonal communication is important for everyone because most jobs require effective interaction with other people. This is now vital for success in the workplace. In a general manner, we can consider five positive outcomes of interpersonal communication in the workplace.

1. Team work

Now a day, in an organization, teams are responsible for every work to be done. Team is not merely an association of people they themselves help each other in personal and official matters to achieve the desired results; this is only possible through how good their interpersonal communication is in the workplace for work as a team.

2. Creation of helping mentality among colleagues

Every human has their own limitation and problems in their personal, professional life.

No one can survive alone in this modern world without support others especially in work place. Interpersonal communication among colleagues brings an opportunity to share their problems, thoughts with others that ultimately brings helping mentality among colleagues

3. Tension free work environment

Humans always have problems, tensions and confusions in their daily life regarding both job and professional matters, this will reflect in their working environment. Interpersonal communication among colleagues helps to share these different opinions with others and have discussions on this for finding out actual solutions and leads to a tension-free work environment because of openness among colleagues.

4. Enable cooperation among colleagues

Cooperation is the voluntary collective efforts of various persons working together in an enterprise for achieving common objectives. Interpersonal communication among workers can lead to better cooperation because there will be active sharing of various thoughts and discussion which leads them to work as a team without any doubt.

5. Goal achievement

Every organization has their own objectives to be achieved with in a time frame. This is only possible when everyone in an organization works together as a team with the help of others. For these workers in different areas must have a good interpersonal communication pattern with a formal communication channel to solve problems and achieve the desired result.

Conclusion

Modern organization requires an effective system of interpersonal communication .This is the key to proper co-ordination and achievement of desired goals because every organization has heterogeneous work force differ in many aspects. Interpersonal communication in the workplace among colleagues brings feeling connected and team work mentality which ultimately leads to achievement of desired goals.

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