



A STUDY ON INTERPERSONAL SKILLS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

V.R. Rajesh, Research Scholar, Department of Education, Institute of Advanced Study in Education (Autonomous), Saidapet, Chennai – 600 015 Tamil Nadu, India.

V. Chandrasekaran, Ph. D. Associate Professor and Head, Department of Education, Institute of Advanced Study in Education (Autonomous), Saidapet, Chennai – 600 015, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Interpersonal Skills refer to the level of mental and communicative algorithms applied during social communications and interactions in order to reach certain effects or results. These skills are character traits possessed by an individual rather than skills that can be taught in a classroom. The purpose of this study is to explore the interpersonal skills of college students in relation to certain personal and demographic variables. The sample consisted of 300 college students selected from Chennai city for this study. Communicative Competence Scale developed by Wiemann (1977) was administered to collect the data. Collected data were subjected to statistical analysis and scores of the sample were computed. The result shows significant difference in students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Gender, Degree Studying, Medium of Instruction, Residential Locality and Type of Family. The study also shows that no significant difference in students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Stream of the Study, Type of College Management and Number of Siblings.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Communicative Competence, College Students.*



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INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal Skills (IPS) are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. Social skills, social competence, people skills, soft skills, social self-efficacy, and social intelligence are just a few terms often used to describe IPS (Ferris, Witt, & Hochwarter, 2001; Hochwarter et al., 2006; Klein et al.,

2006; Riggio, 1986; Schneider, Ackerman, & Kanfer, 1996; Sherer et al., 1982; Sternberg, 1985; Thorndike, 1920). Although these terms can include interpersonal skills they tend to be broader and therefore may also refer other types of skills. Rungapadiachy, (1999) defined Interpersonal Skills as “those skills which one needs in order to communicate effectively with another person or a group of people”. Communication plays a central role in personal relationships and that relationships are assessed by the communication skills of others (Burleson, 2003).

Interpersonal Skills Includes:

- Verbal Communication: What we say and how we say it.
- Non-Verbal Communication: What we communicate without words.
- Listening Skills: How we interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages sent by others.
- Negotiation: Working with others to find a mutually agreeable outcome.
- Problem Solving: Working with others to identify, define and solve problems.
- Decision Making: Exploring and analyzing options to make sound decisions.
- Assertiveness: Communicating our values, ideas, beliefs, opinions, needs and wants freely.

Core Characteristics of Interpersonal Skills:

1. Collaborative Skills – the capability to jointly complete tasks with others
2. Cooperative Attitude – the willingness to offer and accept input
3. Leadership – recognition by peers as someone to follow
4. Social Influence – an ability to persuade others
5. Social Empathy – an awareness and concern for others
6. Social Connection – a skill for meaningfully relating to others

Review of Related Study

Lawler et al. (2005) explored the relationship between forgiveness and the broader category of social skills as part of a larger study on the effects of forgiveness on health. This study included measures of trait and state forgiveness. They found that competence in conflict management skills was positively correlated with both trait and state forgiveness.

Mary Bambacas, Margaret Patrickson, (2008) conducted a study on Interpersonal communication skills that enhance organisational commitment among senior HR managers. They found that senior HR managers expected managers to be effective in interpersonal communication focusing mainly on the clarity and frequency of the messages, their ability to

actively listen and the ability to lead in a collaborative way. Sufiana Khatoon Malik, Qurat ul Ain (2012) explored prospective teachers' awareness about interpersonal skills. They found that prospective teachers of university had higher results on each core characteristics of interpersonal skills than those prospective teachers of Education College.

Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out whether there is any significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills based on the following personal and demographic variables: (i) Gender, (ii) Stream of the Study, (iii) Degree Studying, (iv) Medium of Instruction, (v) Residential Locality, (vi) Type of Family, (vii) Type of College Management and (viii) Number of Siblings.
2. To provide appropriate training to improve students Interpersonal Skills.

Hypotheses of the Study

To carry out the study the following null hypothesis are formed:

1. There is no significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to the following personal and demographic variables: (i) Gender, (ii) Stream of the Study, (iii) Degree Studying, (iv) Medium of Instruction, (v) Residential Locality, (vi) Type of Family, (vii) Type of College Management and (viii) Number of Siblings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This investigation adopts the descriptive method using survey method of research as it is most suitable for the present study.

Tool Used in the Study

Communicative Competence Scale developed by Wiemann (1977) was used to gathering the data.

Sample

The students from selected colleges (Government; Government Aided; and Private Colleges) in Chennai city were chosen as sample for this study by using stratified random sampling technique. Thus, a total of 300 college students both male (150) and female (150) were selected for this study.

Collection of the Data

Collection of data was done by the investigator by personally meeting with students and distributing the questionnaire by giving important directions. A proper rapport was established to collect the pertinent data.

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data was analysed by using the following techniques:

- Descriptive Analysis (Mean & Standard deviation)
- Inferential Analysis (t-test & F-ratio)

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis. The mean and standard deviation for the variable Interpersonal Skills scores were computed for the entire sample.

Testing of Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to the following personal and demographic variables: (i) Gender, (ii) Stream of the Study, (iii) Degree Studying, (iv) Medium of Instruction, (v) Residential Locality, (vi) Type of Family, (vii) Type of College Management and (viii) Number of Siblings.

RESULTS

Results of the Table-1 shows significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Gender (the calculated t-value is 2.44 and it is significant at 0.05 level), Degree Studying (the calculated t-value is 3.04 and it is significant at 0.01 level), Medium of Instruction (the calculated t-value is 4.28 and it is significant at 0.01 level), Residential Locality (the calculated t-value is 2.47 and significant at it is 0.05 level) and Type of Family (the calculated t-value is 3.29 and significant at it is 0.05 level). There is no significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Stream of the Study.

TABLE 1: Showing the Significance of Difference in the Mean Scores of Interpersonal Skills with respect to Gender, Stream of the Study, Degree Studying, Medium of Instruction, Residential Locality and Type of Family.

| Variable | Background Variables | Category | N | Mean | SD | t – value | Level of Significance |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Interpersonal Skills | Gender | Male | 150 | 137.17 | 76.51 | 2.44* | S |
| | | Female | 150 | 121.35 | 20.34 | | |
| | | Total | 300 | | | | |
| | Stream of the Study | Arts | 125 | 125.16 | 24.11 | 0.15 | NS |
| | | Science | 175 | 126.19 | 70.95 | | |
| | | Total | 300 | | | | |
| | Degree Studying | UG | 153 | 121.71 | 28.15 | 3.04** | S |
| | | PG | 147 | 143.18 | 82.42 | | |
| | | Total | 300 | | | | |
| | Medium of Instruction | Tamil | 132 | 115.16 | 22.21 | 4.28** | S |
| | | English | 168 | 146.35 | 86.26 | | |
| | | Total | 300 | | | | |
| | Residential Locality | Urban | 143 | 145.85 | 28.65 | 2.47* | S |
| | | Rural | 157 | 129.06 | 78.14 | | |
| | | Total | 300 | | | | |
| Type of Family | Nuclear | 126 | 127.98 | 70.00 | 3.29** | S | |
| | Joint | 174 | 148.27 | 28.14 | | | |
| | Total | 300 | | | | | |

* indicates 0.05 Level of Significance

** indicates 0.01 Level of Significance

Further, from Table-1 it is inferred that the description for the categories of the background variables such as Gender, Degree Studying, Medium of Instruction, Residential Locality and Type of Family along with their frequency N, mean and standard deviation values. Male students have more mean value (137.17) than the female students (121.35). Post graduate students have more mean value (143.18) than the under graduate students (121.71). English medium students have more mean value (146.35) than the Tamil medium students (115.16). Urban students have more mean value (145.85) than the rural students (129.06). Joint family students have more mean value (148.27) than the Nuclear family students (127.98).

TABLE 2: Showing the Group Difference on Interpersonal Skills with respect to Type of College Management and Number of Siblings.

| Variable | Background Variables | Sources of Variation | Df | Sum of Squares | Mean Squares | F-ratio | Level of Significance |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----|----------------|--------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Interpersonal Skills | Type of College Management | Between Group | 2 | 6439 | 3219 | 1.01 | NS |
| | | Within Group | 297 | 9.41 | 3170 | | |
| | | Total | 299 | 9.47 | | | |
| | Number of Siblings | Between Group | 2 | 157.6 | 78.82 | 2.47 | NS |
| | | Within Group | 297 | 9.47 | 3191 | | |
| | | Total | 299 | 9.47 | | | |

Results of the Table-2 shows that there is no significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Type of College Management and Number of Siblings.

Major Findings

After analysis of tabulated data the investigator found out the following findings.

1. There is significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Gender, Degree Studying, Medium of Instruction, Residential Locality and Type of Family.
2. Male students have more mean value than the female students. Post graduate students have more mean value than the under graduate students. English medium students have more mean value than the Tamil medium students. Urban students have more mean value than the rural students. Joint family students have more mean value than the Nuclear family students
3. There is no significant difference in college students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Stream of the Study, Type of College Management and Number of Siblings.

Educational Implications

Interpersonal skills become so natural that students may take them for granted, never thinking about how they communicate with other people. Impairment in the ability to effectively communicate may hinder successful relational development in young adults. This can potentially impact an array of life areas such as family relationships, socialization, college performance, and employment. Subconsciously we've all been developing our interpersonal skills since childhood. Students need to be taught the skills required for interacting effectively with others and then motivated use these skills if students are to become socially competent. All the stakeholders-government, policy makers, educational institutions, professors and primarily the parents should help the students to improve their interpersonal skills in perfect consonance. Through awareness of how an individual interact with others and with practice students can improve their interpersonal skills. With a little time

and effort students can develop these skills. Good interpersonal skills can improve many aspects of students' life professionally and socially they lead to better understanding and relationships.

CONCLISION

Foundations of many other skills are built on strong interpersonal skills. Since, these skills are relevant to students' personal relationships, social affairs and professional lives. Without good interpersonal skills it is often more difficult to develop other important life skills. Unlike specialised and technical skills (hard skills), interpersonal skills (soft skills) are used every day and in every area of students' lives. Students with good interpersonal skills are usually perceived as optimistic, calm, confident and charismatic qualities that are often endearing or appealing to others. Students who have worked on developing strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives.

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