

## Supervisory Interpersonal Communication Skill Principles, Functions and Attributes – A Review

Open  
Access

Mazlan Ismail<sup>1,\*</sup>, Mohamad Syazli Fathi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Razak Faculty of Technology and Informatics Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 54100 Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

Because of the labor-intensive characteristic of construction site, human errors have greater impacts on construction safety. Unfortunately, people are prone to errors, and human errors have become a part of daily activities. Furthermore, unsafe acts have been identified as a major factor of construction accidents. In addition, 70% of construction safety accidents are closely related to the construction team. In order to prevent accidents, it is necessary to improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of the people involved. Two-way communication can lead to a change in behavior. Interpersonal relations positively impact individual attitudes, opinions and organizational outcomes. The objective of this current study is to identify supervisory interpersonal communication skills principles, functions and attributes. Literature review is adopted as study methodology of this current study. Soft skills such as communication skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills, leadership skills, interpersonal or people skills inclusive skills on effective listening, speaking, reading and writing are the few examples that significantly relevant. Interpersonal communication is a term usually applied to verbal and nonverbal interfaces in one-on-one or some small-group settings. Poor communication skills can cause irrevocable damage to relationships; affecting productivity, satisfaction, performance, morale, trust, respect, self – confidence, and even physical health. Listening, speaking, reading and writing these four techniques really helpful to improve communication.

#### **Keyword:**

Interpersonal Communication Skills, Soft Skills, Supervisor, Construction Site and Unsafe Behaviors

Copyright © 2020 PENERBIT AKADEMIA BARU - All rights reserved

### 1. Introduction

The work processes in construction work site are more likely than others to breed unsafe behaviours. The consequences of these unsafe behaviours can be serious. Unsafe behaviour is defined as any behaviour that an employee engages in without regard to safety rules, standards, procedures, instructions, and specific criteria in the system. In addition, 70% of construction safety accidents are closely related to the construction team. Therefore, the management and control of unsafe behaviour in construction teams are keys to safe production and safety management. The unsafe behaviour of the construction team depends on the situation in which it is located; it mainly involves contextual elements such as the objective environment, the realistic basis of the construction team and the interaction mechanism between the internal members of the construction team with others and the supervisor [1]. According to Heinrich's theory, 88 % of an accident is initiated by unsafe act of human. Added further by [2], unsafe work environments have clear consequences for both individuals and organizations. In addition, safety-related behaviours to be

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [toklan@icloud.com](mailto:toklan@icloud.com) (Mazlan Ismail)

leading indicators of safety because they can communicate the absence of safety before actual damage is caused by an accident. Contemplated by [3] unsafe acts have been identified as a major factor of construction accidents. Furthermore, the decrease of the number of workers' unsafe acts can improve the safety performance of construction projects, and elimination of unsafe acts should be the primary effort of every construction project sites. In addition, Safety training is not only increases safety knowledge but also improves safety climate on site and could be a positive factor of construction workers' safety attitude. Study by [4] concluded that, in order to prevent accidents, it is necessary to improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of the people involved.

One who is very good in interpersonal communication can report to and work with a wide variety of people, handle conflicts, negotiate differences, make requests effectively and receive information objectively. A person who is effective in interpersonal communication will be open to the ideas of other employees and willing to put forward their views of essential activities in the process of problem solving. Moreover, good interpersonal communication skills are very important to employees for making a successful organization [5]. In addition, study by [6] identified that listening, speaking, reading and writing are four techniques really helpful to improve communication. Increased communication skills (verbal, non-verbal, cross-cultural) will establish effective safety communication between workers and foremen, as well as between foremen and their colleagues and top managers, are central to improve safety [7] Study by [8] conclude that one attempt to minimize the number of occupational accidents is through education and training.

## **2. Research Findings**

### **2.1 Interpersonal Communication**

The Study by [5] recognised that Interpersonal Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another, which is very essential for the success of any organization. Interpersonal communication provides a way of reaching others with facts, ideas, thoughts and values. Added further by [9] communication is an active process; therefore, it can be influenced by various environmental or interpersonal factors. Personality is the largest, most powerful, and most effective factor of stability affecting the attitude, feelings, beliefs, and behaviour of the humankind. Furthermore, there are 5 main dimensions of personality including neuroticism, extroversion, experientialism, acceptability, and conscientiousness. Personality and personality traits form the basis of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions of the individual. In addition, study by [10] observed that interpersonal communication in Islam is universal and free from any prejudices based on race, colour, language, religion, culture, or nationality. The Islamic perspective of interpersonal communication, human interaction and societal relationship is because the individual human being cannot secure all the things necessary for his livelihood without the cooperation of someone else. Contemplated by [11], communication plays a pivotal role in all types of relationships whether it is personal or professional. Feelings must be expressed and reciprocated in relationships while the individuals need to communicate with each other effectively for better understanding. In addition, study by [12] identified that in interpersonal communication, the major emphasis is on transferring information from one person to another. Furthermore, interpersonal communication skills concentrated mainly on the dimensions of empathy, comprehension, active listening, feedback, effectiveness (openness, clarity, transparency, brevity, kindness, concreteness, consideration), persuasion, trusting and being an effective sender (effective body language, effectiveness in verbal and non- verbal communication).

## 2.2 Basic Principles of Interpersonal Communication

According to [13] there are four basic principle of basic principles of interpersonal communication as shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**  
Basic Principles of Interpersonal Communication

Principles	Description
Inescapable	Unless you're on the deserted island the rest of your life, that it's nearly impossible to avoid other human.
Irreversible	When words are said, they cannot be taken back no matter how hard we expand on what we meant, or apologize.
Complicated	We are not robot. We emote so it is not just about the words that come out of your mouth, but it is a whole slew of verbal and non-verbal factors that lend to its interpretation.
Contextual	Interpersonal communication also is not always completely under your control as it depends on the who, what, where and why of the conversation.

## 2.3 Functions of Interpersonal Communication

Four functions of interpersonal communication recognised by [14] such as gaining information, building understanding, establishing identity and interpersonal needs.

**Table 2**  
Function of Interpersonal Communication

Function	Description
Gaining Information	Provides information and knowledge about other persons. This helps in communicating more effectively with others. Knowing a person helps to predict he thinks, feels and acts.
Building Understanding	Helps to understand in a better way as to what someone says in a given context. Words can mean very different things depending on how they are said or in what context.
Establishing Identity	Helps to establish the person, on the basis of relationship and image.
Interpersonal Needs	Helps to fulfil the interpersonal needs such as need to lead others and prove one's abilities and need of recognition and developing relationships with members of group.

## 2.4 Interpersonal Communication Skills Attributes

Study [15] identified eleven most important interpersonal communication skills such as verbal communication skills, active listening, body language, openness, negotiation skills, decision making and problem solving skills, conflict resolution, assertiveness, positive attitude, teamwork, and empathy. In addition, [16] recognised eight crucial soft skills for supervisor such as communication,

conflict resolution, leadership, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, time and priority management, diversity and generational differences in workplace and problem solving.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Communication is essential for our daily routine and profession. It is complicated and contextual in nature. Communication is essential because, in order for us to obtain information, building an understanding and fulfilling our interpersonal needs. From the literature review carried out, authors derived with the necessary interpersonal communication skills that are important for construction site supervisors to enhance indoor to perform effective communication in reducing unsafe behaviour or unsafe act in construction project sites. The variables are such as empathy, comprehension, active listening, feedback, effectiveness (openness, clarity, transparency, brevity, kindness, concreteness, consideration), persuasion, trusting, being effective sender (effective body language, effectiveness in verbal and non-verbal communication, negotiation skills, decision making skills, problem solving skills, conflict resolution, assertiveness, positive attitude, leadership, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, time and priority management, and diversity and generational differences in workplace. These variables shall be considered further as the basis for the development of construction site supervisor's interpersonal communication skills training module. Training can be positive factor of construction worker's safety attitude.

### 4. Conclusion

In order to reduce accident statistics in construction project sites, there is a must for construction team to reduce unsafe behaviour or unsafe act. To reduce unsafe behaviour or unsafe act, it is paramount to enhance construction site supervisor's knowledge, skills and attitude in interpersonal communication skills through training.

### References

- [1] Li, Zhen, Xiaofei Lv, Hongming Zhu, and Zhaohan Sheng. "Analysis of complexity of unsafe behavior in construction teams and a multiagent simulation." *Complexity* 2018 (2018).
- [2] Beus, Jeremy M., Mallory A. McCord, and Dov Zohar. "Workplace safety: A review and research synthesis." *Organizational psychology review* 6, no. 4 (2016): 352-381.
- [3] Xu, Sheng, Patrick XW Zou, and Hanbin Luo. "Impact of attitudinal ambivalence on safety behaviour in construction." *Advances in Civil Engineering* 2018 (2018).
- [4] Endroyo, Bambang, Bambang E. Yuwono, and Djemari Mardapi. "Model of learning/training of Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) based on industry in the construction industry." *Procedia Engineering* 125 (2015): 83-88.
- [5] Singh, A. K. "Role of interpersonal communication in organizational effectiveness." *International Journal of Research in Management and Business Studies* 1, no. 4 (2014): 36-39.
- [6] Mahajan, Rajendra. "The Key role of communication skills in the life of professionals." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 20, no. 12 (2015): 36-39.
- [7] Jeschke, Katharina Christiane, Pete Kines, Liselotte Rasmussen, Lars Peter Sønnerbo Andersen, Johnny Dyreborg, Jeppe Ajslev, Anders Kabel, Ester Jensen, and Lars Louis Andersen. "Process evaluation of a Toolbox-training program for construction foremen in Denmark." *Safety science* 94 (2017): 152-160.
- [8] Sabanci, Ali, Ahmet Sahin, and İzzet Özdemir. "Interpersonal Communication Skills of the Leaders of Inspection Groups in Turkey." *Online Submission* 5, no. 4 (2016): 148-159.
- [9] Agha Mohammad Hasani, Parvin, Mohammadreza Mokhtaree, Mahmood Sheikh Fathollahi, and Jamileh Farrokzadian. "Interpersonal communication skills and its association with personality dimensions of nurses in Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences, Iran, in 2015." *Journal of Occupational Health and Epidemiology* 7, no. 2 (2018): 112-118.
- [10] Khalil, Amal Ibrahim Abd El-Fattah. "The Islamic perspective of interpersonal communication." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2016): 22-37.

- 
- [11] Obakpolo, Patricia. "Improving interpersonal relationship in workplaces." *Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5, no. 6 (2015): 115-125.
- [12] Salazar, Leslie Ramos. "The relationship between compassion, interpersonal communication apprehension, narcissism, and verbal aggressiveness." *Journal of Happiness & Well-Being* 4, no. 1 (2016): 1-14.
- [13] *4 Principles of Great Interpersonal Communication Skills*, in *Soft Skills-Ask a Wharton MBA*.
- [14] *Functions of Interpersonal Communication*, in *World Full of Questions*. 2017.
- [15] Beqiri, G., *Key Interpersonal Communication Skills you need to Improve*, in *Virtualspeech*. 2018.
- [16] Blog, H.I., *8 Crucial Skills Supervisors Need to have*, in *HR Insights Blog*. 2018. p. ERC Making Workplaces Great.