Relationship between Interpersonal Communication Skills and Organizational Commitment (Case Study: Jahad Keshavarzi and University of Qom, Iran)

Hassan Zarei Matin  
Associate Professor, University of Tehran, Iran

Golamreza Jandaghi  
Associate Professor, University of Tehran, Iran

Fateme Haj Karimi  
Graduate, Public Management, University of Tehran, Iran

Ali Hamidizadeh  
Graduate, Public Management, University of Tehran, Iran

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to identify the interpersonal communication skills that enhance organizational commitment. To do so in a descriptive survey, the models provided by Robbins and Hunsaker and by Allen and Meyer were used to measure interpersonal communication skills and organizational commitment respectively. The used tool was questionnaire. The statistical community included public organizations in Qom city among which two organizations were selected randomly. Sampling was also conducted randomly in both organizations. Finally, 106 individuals responded to questionnaire items. The findings of the research show that among existing skills in the model, just team building skill has a significant relation with organizational commitment.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication Skill, Organizational Commitment, Robbins and Hunsaker, Team building

1. Introduction

The need for thoughtful, effective communication in the workplace is paramount. Seldom does an employee work in absolute isolation, instead, workers interact with consumers, peers, and management on a daily basis; this makes interpersonal communication an essential skill for today's employees. Today's employers look for quality skills in interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving, not just the ability to complete job duties (Un ange passé, 2008 :3-4). Consequently in the absence of effective communication, organizational goals will succumb to individualistic and personal goals (Magnus, 2009 :3). Effective interpersonal communication skills are essential to social interaction, and to the building and maintenance of all relationships. Poor communication skills can cause irrevocable damage to relationships; affecting productivity, satisfaction, performance, morale, trust, respect, self confidence, and even physical health (Un ange passé, 2008 :1-2). In any organization, the success of achieving its goals depends largely on the manager's communication ability and skills (Magnus, 2009 :4).

In an era of apparent constant change and “erosion of corporate loyalty” interpersonal communication skills in managers are vital to promoting employee attachment to the organization.
However, researchers have paid little attention to the interpersonal communication skills that managers need to enhance their subordinates’ commitment to the organization. (Bambacas and Patrickson, 2008: 52). The aim of this paper is to identify the interpersonal communication skills that enhance organizational commitment.

2. Literature
2.1. Interpersonal Communication

Communication is the transmission of meaning from one person to another or to many people, whether verbally or non-verbally. Communication from one person to another is commonly depicted as a simple triangle consisting of the context, the sender, the massage, and the receiver (Barrett, 2006: 386).

Communication skills have great importance in the work area just as they have in all areas of life. For most of the professions, communication skills such as being able to express one or to understand the others correctly are required for success and satisfaction at least in elementary level (unalan and Tengilimoglu, 2009, 245). Even though an organization performs its tasks more efficient than expected, one should know that this success will not continue so long if it lacks the same efficacy in communication (Totar, 2000). The success of communication depends on several factors. Transmission of message by the process of encoding and decoding the message, which may result in short-term perception, is not adequate for the success of communication. Communication should be in such a way that will give opportunity for the respondent or receiver to take decision with regard to the message he perceived (master, 2008 :5).

The concept of interpersonal communication skills was firstly introduced in 1950s (Berko et al., 1998/1378: 58). Interpersonal communication skills have been defined as ability to work well with people, and involve your acceptance of others, without prejudice. This does not always mean that you like the person, but you are able to overcome your dislike in order to achieve your tasks (Smith, 2009b : 1).

Interpersonal communication skills are ability to respond to staff’s needs positively, fostering a non-discriminatory work environment where staff can develop to their full personal potentials, and delegating authority (Avkiran, 2000 :656).

Interpersonal communication competence consists of a set of skills, knowledge about communication, and self-evaluation. Competent interpersonal communication skills include self-disclosure, owned feelings and thoughts, and descriptiveness and support. (Robinson, 2006: 1).

Robbins and Hunsaker (2003) reviewed a large number of studies and synthesized the interpersonal skills that surfaced on most lists . Most of these skills belong to three categories – leadership, the process of communication and motivation. Interpersonal skills under leadership relate to leadership style, handling conflicts, running meetings, team building and promoting change. The process of communication includes sending messages, listening and providing feedback. Similarly, motivating is broken down into goal setting, clarifying expectations, persuading and empowering. Other interpersonal skill include negotiating (Bambacas and Patrickson, 2008: 52-53).

In this paper, this model is applied to examine and measure managers' interpersonal communication skill variable. The dimensions and components of above model are shown in the following table:
Below, each dimensions and components is investigated. Among interpersonal communication skills, one point out such skills as talking, well guiding and ordering, requesting (Berko et al., 1998/1999), proper treatment with critics (Berko et al, 1998/1999; Golman, 1995), nonverbal communications (Isonza, 2008; Master, 2008; Robbins, 1989; Berko et al, 1998/1999; Smith, 1996), examining individual's conception (Courtois, 2007), cross-social skills and sympathy (Un ange passé, 2008; Farhangi, 1995), convincing (Decker, 1989), openness, supporting, positivism and equality (Farhangi, 1995) which are not mentioned in this model.

### 2.2. Commitment

Two approaches to define organizational commitment are found in the literature. First, commitment is understood as an employee’s intention to continue working in the organization (e.g., Meyer, 1997.) Second, organizational commitment may be defined as an attitude in the form of an attachment that exists between the individual and the organization, and is reflected in the relative strength of an employee’s psychological identification and involvement with the organization (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979). This research concurs with the first definition.

Meyer and Allen (1997) defined the general concept of organizational commitment as “a psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization” (p. 252).

More recently, several researchers have categorized the concept of organizational commitment into three major themes: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Laschinger et al., 2000; Fields, 2002; Manion, 2004). Affective commitment is the “employee’s linking for an organization, and related to involvement with the organization” (Fields, 2002, p. 43):

- [. . .]Normative commitment designates the feeling of obligation of needing to continue employment; and continuance commitment is created by high costs associated with leaving the organization, and creates a feeling of needing to continue employment (Van de Hooff and de Ridder, 2004, p. 119).

Meyer and Allen’s three-factor concept and instrument of organizational commitment was used for the current research to measure the perceived levels of employee commitment in the organization.

### 2.3. Communication Links to Commitment

Managers communicate daily with their subordinates typically giving feedback on performance, executing performance appraisals, providing information and so forth. These actions in turn facilitate developing or negating subordinate organizational commitment as it is the way these practices are
perceived that influences levels of commitment (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001; Tansky and Cohen, 2001).

The organizational commitment concept is multidimensional in nature (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Angle and Lawson, 1993; Hackett et al., 1994; Meyer et al., 1990; Somers, 1993) and frequently in researches (Meyer and Smith, 2001; Francis-Smythe and Smith, 1997; Beck and Wilson, 1997; Varona, 1996; Guzley, 1992; Van den Hooff and de Ridder, 2004; Thornhill et al., 1996; Jacobs, 2006; Ng et al., 2006; Putti et al., 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). These dimensions are examined separately. In this research, this variable is not investigated in dimension level to examine the relationship between organizational commitment and interpersonal communication skills.

2.4. Dimensions and Components of Robbins and Hunsaker's Model

In this section, along with dimensions and components of the model, research assumptions are also introduced.

2.4.1. Leadership

A leader should know the skills in group leadership and that includes the need to accomplish the common task, how to discourage group frustration, disharmony, mutual criticism and eventual disintegration of the group. The leader should maintain a cohesive social unity through group high morale and team spirit. Finally, the manager should understand the individual needs of his workers, his choice and appropriateness of words and language (Magnus, 2009:3). Leader communication consists of layered, expanding skills from core strategy development and effective writing and speaking to the use of these skills in more complex organizational situations. As the manager's perspective and control expand, he or she will need to improve the core communication skills to become effective in the large, more complex organizational situations (Barrett, 2006: 386). Leadership dimensions include the following components:

2.4.1.1. Leadership Style

One can study leader's performance in two different levels. First, practical observation of leaders in a macro level indicates that leadership style can impact on the output of the group and the views of its members. In a minor level, one can introduces special skills for each leadership style. Here, leadership style is studied in a macro level.

H1 = There is a significant relationship between leadership style and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.1.2. Handling Conflicts

Organization leaders are responsible for creating a work environment that enables people to thrive. When disagreements and differences of opinions escalate into interpersonal conflict, leaders must intervene immediately (Browning, 2007:1). To have common mission/purpose, shared values and goals, agreements and policies clear and in writing, fair, participatory decision-making process, creating community spirit, buddy system, wisdom circles, staying in touch with each other emotionally, adopting communication agreements consist of: not speaking until another person is finished speaking, addressing each other respectfully, no hurtful physical contact, … bring in an outside mediator, serving as kindly “fair witnesses” in meetings between community members in conflict, active listening, nonviolent communication, process work, voice dialogue and another cases are the ways for handling conflict (Leafe Christian, 2005: 37).

H2 = There is a significant relationship between managers' handling conflicts skill and employees' organizational commitment.
2.4.1.3. Running Meetings
A necessary skill for most managers is the capability of running and arranging efficient meetings. One of the important aspects of training is to help managers understand how to arrange and run fruitful meetings (Dyer, 1983).

H3 = There is a significant relationship between running meetings skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.1.4. Team Building
If productivity levels can be impacted by an employee’s unwillingness to share information in the team building process, it is necessary to define productivity in terms of an organization and its relationships (Italics, 2006, 3). The early stage of team development requires clear communication of what the project entails and how each team member will fit into the overall scope of the work. The project manager needs to constantly communicate the need to share information, learn about fellow team members, and de-emphasize the individual over the group (Smith, 2009a, 2-3).

H4 = There is a significant relationship between managers' team building skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.1.5. Promoting the Change
Promoting the change and creating new improving methods are not mechanical leverages rather they are a movement relied upon material, spiritual, mental and ethical aspects that are not possible just with technical tools and the need preparedness, belief, trust, satisfaction, enthusiasm and belonging. Effective change management shall be base on understanding the nature of the organization as a system as well as conceiving the interaction between structure, operation process and its culture (Sadler, 1997).

H5 = There is a significant relationship between managers' promoting change skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.2. Process of Communication
It involves information receiving from listening and reading to conceive and accept and encouraging to action which includes changes in attitude and even behavior (Decker, 1989). It include following three components.

2.4.2.1. Sending Message
A supervisor shall be capable to send organizational aims to his/he subordinates clearly (Ibid).

H6 = There is a significant relationship between managers' sending message skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.2.2. Listening
The most effective communication can take place when all the people in the conversation are engaged in active listening (Abercrombieb, 2007). For this purpose, Listen with an open mind - be aware of your own preconceived notions. Listen to what the person is saying, without adapting it to what you want to hear. Do not listen with the intent to respond, but rather to understand (Hagen, 2008, 1).

H7 = There is a significant relationship between managers' listening skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.2.3. Providing Feedback
In communications, many problems arise due to misunderstandings. These problems will likely arise less if the manager can use networking in communication process (Robbins, 1989)

H8 = There is a significant relationship between managers' feedback providing skill and employees' organizational commitment.
2.4.3. Motivation
The third dimension of the model is motivation. Motivation is an inner action and one can not enforce it outside. One of the most important tasks of managers is to provide conditions by creating infrastructures, systems, proper environment and communication development in which people feel motivation (Smith, 1996). Its dimension include

2.4.3.1. Goal Setting
The one goal-oriented person usually draws the actual steps in his plan of action which contains exactly how much and when to work, what amount of time should be dedicated for his work as well as his family and other activities, where should he take rest and often calculate the rate of success by taking into account the amount of progress he has accomplished in his goal setting (Wilson, 2008:1). The act of goal setting compels us to focus our energy and attention towards a specific outcome, which makes it a very powerful process as we plan for the things we want from life (Tensteps, 2009: 1-2).

H9 = There is a significant relationship between managers' goal setting skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.3.2. Clarifying Expectations
Clarifying the aims and expectations, managers can remove ambiguities. It is sufficient that they talk their employees honestly.

H10 = There is a significant relationship between managers' clarifying expectations skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.3.3. Persuading
It means persuading communications and the capability of sending the message in a manner that people understand and accept them easily (Hersey and Blanchard, 1989: 305).

When one communicate others through propensity, they will be more prepared to follow their managers. Since managers or parents have often posts and power, they can first conduct them and then accompanying them to achieve an effective communication (Rezaian, 2004, 323).

H11 = There is a significant relationship between managers' persuading skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.3.4. Empowering
It is an accepted macro strategy to improve continuously. It is like an abstract sign for all types of individuals' merits applications in new and creative methods for all aspects of organizational performance (Kinlaw, 1995). The main task of management with regard to workplace communications is to use the utmost usage of communicational skills for empowering (Smith, 1996).

H12 = There is a significant relationship between managers' empowering skill and employees' organizational commitment.

2.4.4. Negotiating
Discussion means individual's efforts to meet his/her own needs. Discussion is a kind of bargaining to achieve an agreement and to find a solution for problems. Both parties should be aware of what they are going to say as well as its logic. If you can't find a solution, you should expect its consequences (Berko et al., 1998/1378: 219).

H13 = There is a significant relationship between managers' negotiating skill and employees' organizational commitment.
3. Method

3.1. Sample

Population of the research was public offices in Qom city of which two Jahad keshavarzi office and Qom University were selected randomly. Then, 102 employees were selected randomly and after answering the questionnaires, their opinions were analyzed. 52 respondents were from jahad keshavarzi office and 50 were from Qom University.

3.2. Participant Characteristics

Respondents were mostly men (68%). Nearly half of the respondents (57%) were B.A, 13 %M.A and 30% with Associate of Arts. The organizational status of 13% of respondents was manager and 87% were expert. The working background of 28% of them was under 5 years, 37% from 5 to 15 years, 24% from 15 to 25 years and 11% were above 25 years.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Interpersonal Communication Skills

As mentioned in previous sections, the model of Robbins and Hunsaker is used in this research to measure interpersonal communication skills. By utilizing the conceptual framework of the model, the authors designed a questionnaire and its validity was confirmed after disseminating the questionnaire among elites. The final questionnaire includes 39 items and utilized scale is Likert's five-degree range (5 = very high and 1 = very low). To examine the reliability of the questionnaire, split – half and Chronbach-alpha methods were used. The alpha coefficient is 0.96 and the reliability from split-half is 0.93.

3.3.2 Organizational Commitment

In order to measure the perceived levels of organizational commitment, the three-factor commitment scale of Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) was used. The measure is based on a conceptualization of commitment that includes affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Six items with Likert-type responses inquire into each dimension. The Chronbach alpha coefficient for this questionnaire is 0.72.

4. Results

The results of the research are shown in two sections. In first section, the results of descriptive statistics and in the second one, the results of deductive statistics are provided. In table 2, the mean and standard deviation of components, dimensions and variables are indicated.
Table 2: Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling conflict</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running meeting</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team building</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting change</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending message</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying expectations</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Components of ICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal communication skills</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among interpersonal communication skill components, "sending message" (M = 3.7) has the highest and "providing feedback" (M = 3.01) has the lowest mean. In examining the dimension of interpersonal communication skills, there is no significant difference between means. The mean of motivation is 3.42, communication process is 3.4 and leadership is 3.39. Finally, interpersonal communication skill variable (M = 3.39) has higher mean than organizational commitment variable (M = 3.9).

In examining the relationship between components of interpersonal communication skill and organizational commitment, since there is a high correlation between the components of interpersonal communication skills, the correlation among each components and organizational commitment is calculated by using partial correlations, provided that other components are stable. In table 3, results are indicated.

Table 3: Partial correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of ICS</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling conflicts</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running meetings</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team building</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting change</td>
<td>-0.186</td>
<td>0.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending message</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>0.581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying expectation</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>-0.232</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that among various components, only team building has a significant relation with organizational commitment. The achieved significance level for this component is 0.043. The achieved significance level for the relations of other components and organizational commitment is more than 0.05 which shows that there is no significant relationship. In reviewing the relationship
between two variables of interpersonal communication skills and employees' organizational commitment, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. Its amount is 0.304 (p – value = 0.011) which shows a direct and significant relation between these two variables.

In addition to study the relations among variables, we are planning to fit organizational commitment model through multiple linear regression and to identify those components which increase organizational commitment. The results of model fitness are shown in table 4 Stepwise model is used to enter the variables.

Table 4: Linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Beta coefficients</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.381</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling conflicts</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running meetings</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>0.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team building</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.229</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting change</td>
<td>-0.210</td>
<td>0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending message</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td>0.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying expectation</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>-0.139</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>0.691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to intercept(p=0.000), among entered variables, only team making component (p=0.002) was remained in the model and other components were eliminated. Thus, final model has an intercept (B=2.381) and team building coefficient(B=0.229). Attained model is significant (p=0.002) and the amount of R Square is 0.135.

5. Discussion
The results of the research show that among hypotheses, only H4 namely the relationship between team building skill and organizational commitment is confirmed. In doing so, partial correlation was used. Besides, multiple linear regression was also used and its results confirmed the results of previous method and H4 was supported. Hence, in answering the first main question of the research, one can conclude that improving employees' organizational commitment is expected if managers improve their team building skill. Another important point is the amount of determination coefficient(R Square = 0.13). Considering the significant relation between two interpersonal communication skills and organizational commitment, the amount of this coefficient indicates that just 13% of organizational commitment changes are the result of components defined in the model provided by Robinson and Hansaker. In the meantime, there were other components that are not considered in measuring interpersonal communication skills. Therefore, subsequent authors are recommended to use another model or add other components to existing model in order to investigate the relationship between these two variables.

The rate of correlation between two variables of interpersonal communication skill variable and organizational commitment is 0.304 which indicates that the relation between these two variables is not so intense. According to observations and other researches, it was determined that there are other factors in studied organizations which affect organizational commitment and they are further rooted in meeting preliminary needs. Therefore, it is recommended to study the factors which impact organizational commitment.
References


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