Original Article

Explaining interpersonal communication facilitators in educational managers and staff at the university of medical sciences: a qualitative study

Shahla Moradi [1], Manizheh Zakaryaei [*2], Mohammad Masoud Vakili[3]

[1] Phd student in Educational Management, Dep. of Educational Sciences, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran
[2] Assistant Professor, Dep. of Educational Sciences, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran
[3] assistant professor, Dept. of Health Education and Promotion, Faculty of School Health, Zanjan University of Medical sciences, Zanjan, Iran

Article Info

Article history:
Received 21 Feb 2022
Accepted 9 September 2022
Published 18 September 2022
Keywords:
Communication
Facilitators
Interpersonal communication
Manager
Medical education
Staff

[*]Corresponding author:
Manizheh Zakaryaei
Assistant Professor,
Dep. Of Educational Sciences,
Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan,Iran
Email: manjihzakaryaei@yahoo.com

Abstract

Background & Objective: Interpersonal communication has been constantly been taken into consideration in recent years and has been considered an important requirement for successful job performance in organizations. This study aimed to explain the experiences and views of managers and staff of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Zanjan, Iran, on interpersonal communication skills.

Materials & Methods: The present qualitative study was conducted with a conventional content analysis approach. The participants (n=10) were selected from the educational managers and staff of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences using the purposive sampling method and taking into account the maximum diversity in demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education level, and job position. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews until reaching saturation and analyzed simultaneously. Qualitative data analysis was performed manually.

Results: Based on the participants' experiences, 160 initial codes were extracted, which were eventually classified into two main categories, including facilitators and inhibitors, of which only the facilitators were examined in this study. The main category of facilitators was summarized in 19 subcategories and 6 categories, including the facilitator's personal and professional characteristics, quality of work life, organizational structures, organizational civic behaviors, communication skills and channels, and attention to ethical and ideological principles.

Conclusion: The results of the study showed that from the point of view of managers and employees of medical education, paying attention to the facilitators of interpersonal communication was one of the most important factors in interpersonal communication, and addressing them would strengthen effective interpersonal communication, lead to better interactions between employees, increase satisfaction, and improve the quality of work.

Copyright © 2021, This is an original open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-noncommercial 4.0 International License which permit copy and redistribution of the material just in noncommercial usages with proper citation

Introduction

In recent years, interpersonal communication has been continuously paid attention to as an important requirement for successful job performance in organizations; for this reason, companies and institutions attach great importance to interpersonal communication (1). It is important to examine different forms of communication because every administrative and managerial function and activity needs direct and indirect communication in some way. Managers communicate with others to plan, organize, lead, and supervise. This means that communication skills influence individual and organizational effectiveness; therefore, it seems rational that the lack of effective communication is considered one of the most important obstacles to organizational effectiveness (1). Today, employers consider communication competence one of the main criteria for employment and promotion, and researchers have long considered it a type of human capital that is necessary for the success of managers and employees at all levels and the improvement of the performance of the organization (2). Koli, citing Ghassabi Khoshe Mehr and Eskandari, states that communication is a mechanism through which human relationships are established and expanded (3). People share their information, thoughts, and feelings by exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages with each other by making communications (4).

Communication skills refer to a set of potential and actual abilities of people, with the help of which it is possible to achieve acceptable and informative behaviors until reaching a high level of emotional relationship. Communication skills facilitate interpersonal interactions and the achievement of individual goals (5). These skills are so important that their insufficiency can be associated with

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

feelings of loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, and lack of academic and career success (6).

Managers at different levels are responsible for creating correct communication in the organization, must be aware of the quality and quantity of the communication process, and know how to establish effective communication. The results of the research show that poor communication is the most common source of conflict among people. Therefore, managers can facilitate the effective management and the realization of organizational goals by establishing effective communication networks and improving human skills, including the development of communication skills (7). Good communication is of great importance, especially when a manager is cultivating collective spirit or when employees, due to organizational changes, are constantly feeling insecure and threatened with financial hardship (8) Okoro also states that the effectiveness of interpersonal communication plays a significant role in increasing the performance of the workforce and the overall productivity of the organization (9).

The results of a study by Nazari (2012) emphasize that communication skills affect management skills by 89%. This number indicates the positive and appropriate effectiveness of basic communication skills in the acquisition of three management skills (10). Based on the findings of a study by Nazari (2018), communication skills have a good correlation with citizenship behavior and social capital, and the use of management and communication sciences, especially organizational behavior, is highly effective for understanding people's views and attitudes (11).

Nwabueze and Mileski (2018) stated that the success of an organization is dependent on effective communication, particularly in a multicultural and competitive global environment; however, the types of effective communication that influence competitiveness have not been well explored yet. Although managers of organizations are aware of the importance of communication, compared to other factors, less attention has been paid to promoting the use of effective communication inside and outside of the organization (12).

The ability to establish appropriate interpersonal communication with others is considered a key professional skill needed by health sector employees. The World Federation of Medical Education has categorized interpersonal communication skills as one of the seven basic minimum global requirements in the field of medical education to provide health-related care, and it is considered the core of other content in the training programs of clinical skills (13). The ability to establish better communication and professionalism are important to achieve better results in the provision of health-related services, and it is the basis of establishing proper relationships between the patient and family members, the community, and the health sector staff (14). Having proper skills in establishing proper communication with colleagues, clients, and others is considered a basic and key skill for providing desirable care and services in educational and clinical environments. Weak communication skills of health workers reduce the chance of success and increase the possibility of facing complaints and dissatisfaction (15).

Moreover, effective activity and cooperation in the educational and administrative environment require the existence of appropriate communication skills and mutual trust among managers and employees and others. To achieve organizational goals, managers and education employees must have certain skills and qualifications, including interpersonal communication skills. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the experiences of a group of administrators and teaching staff of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Zanjan, Iran, regarding the factors affecting interpersonal communication skills, so that by identifying them, administrators could plan to improve the quality of interpersonal communication skills among managers, staff, and students.

Material & Methods

The current qualitative research was conducted based on a conventional content analysis approach at Zanjan University of Medical Sciences between April 2021 and February 2022. The participants were selected from the educational managers and staff of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences using the purposive sampling method and taking into account the maximum diversity in demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education level, and job position (Table 1).

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the required data. At the beginning of each interview session, first, a brief explanation was given about the objectives of the study and then the participants were asked to express their views, opinions, and experiences about the facilitators of interpersonal relationships between managers and employees in the educational environment. Moreover, the interviewees were allowed to mention any important matter or topic that came to their minds after the interview. The interviews were managed based on the questions in the interview guide.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Management experience (Year)	Work experience (Year)	Administrative post	Age (Year)	Sex
14	29	Head of Education Department	50	Female
17	20	Faculty education expert and former director of health promotion and community nutrition education	43	Female
3/5	12	Director of Graduate Education	52	Male
9	16	Director of Graduate Education	52	Male
16	21	Educational Vice-Chancellor	52	Male
7	9	Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Education	48	Male
26	29	Educational manager of the faculty	55	Female
7	12	Education manager of the faculty	34	Female
_	12	Faculty education expert	34	Male
_	20	EDC expert	43	Female

Some of these questions included: "Describe your working day in detail. Please describe your communication style at work. What factors facilitate your communication in the work environment?"

Probing and exploratory questions, such as "Please explain more about this. Why? and How?", were proposed based on the type of answers to find out the depth of the experiences of the interviewees. The interviews took place in a place agreed between the researcher and the participant; therefore, based on the conditions of the participant and his preference, the interviews were conducted in the participants' office or by phone. The average duration of face-to-face and telephone interviews was 45 min. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and their informed consent and with an emphasis on the confidentiality of individual identities and their conversations.

After listening several times to the recorded interviews, they were transcribed verbatim and converted into text. Simultaneously with data collection, the processes of data analysis and coding were performed. To this aim, the content was transcribed immediately after the completion of the interview. By analyzing each interview, the researcher tried to extract new questions from the interview text and consider the points that seemed ambiguous in the next interviews; therefore, each interview determined the approach of the next interview. The process of data collection and analysis continued until reaching data saturation.

In the present study, by conducting 10 interviews, the researcher realized that there were no new codes to be extracted and theoretical saturation was reached. Data saturation occurs when no more new codes or concepts are generated. In grounded theory, saturation means the completion of all levels of codes and the unavailability of new conceptual data to show new codes or expand existing codes, and the researcher must also reach the sufficiency of the data and terminate the sampling (16).

In this study, data analysis was conducted manually using the conventional content analysis method. To this end, after recording the interviews, the entire interviews were transcribed word-for-word on paper and converted into text. They were reviewed by the researcher and the concepts in each line or sentence related to the main topic of the research were determined and the main concepts of the meaningful sentences were extracted in the form of a code. Afterward, by placing codes with a common concept in one category and naming them, the classification of codes began. In the next stage, the obtained categories from the previous stage were categorized based on similarity, and similar categories were merged and placed in categories and subcategories.

Data validity assessment

In the current research, the reliability and validity of the data were determined based on the index described by Lincoln and Guba (17). In this regard, it was tried to increase the credibility of the research by spending sufficient time on data collection, sufficient participation and interaction with the participants, and re-reviewing and confirming the codes and interpretations obtained from the data analysis by the participants. Step-by-step repetition and data collection and analysis, as well as re-coding by two experts outside of the research team and familiar with the grounded theory method, were performed to increase data dependability, which showed an agreement between the opinions. To increase the conformability of the data, the approval of the university professors and their additional comments were used. Furthermore, the transferability of the data was achieved by using the theoretical purposeful sampling method, taking into account the maximum variety, and making effort to provide a rich description of the research report to evaluate the research and examine its applicability in other fields (17).

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

Regarding the ethical considerations, informed consent and permission to record the audio were obtained from the participants, and they were assured of destroying the content of the recorded interviews after the completion of the research. The research objectives were explained to all individuals, and they were informed of the right to leave the study at any research stage. Moreover, all participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in this study.

Results

Based on the experiences of the participants, the facilitators were extracted into 160 primary codes, which were finally organized into 19 subcategories and 6 categories, which included facilitator's personal and professional characteristics, facilitator's quality of work life, facilitator's organizational structures, organizational civic behaviors, facilitator's communication skills and channels, and attention to moral and ideological principles (Table 2).

Table 2. The main Categories and sub- Categories of interpersonal relationship facilitators of Educational Managers and Staff at the University of Medical Sciences

Main Categories	Secondary Categories	Sub Categories
facilitators of interpersonal relationships	Facilitator's personal and professional characteristics	Personality characteristics of extroversion of people High level of experience and work experience
	Facilitating quality of work life	Correct explanation of the duties Ability to resolve conflict Supportive human relations
	Facilitating organizational structures	Compliance with administrative rules and regulations Delegating responsibility to employees Having a common goal Compliance with administrative hierarchy
	Facilitating Organizational citizenship behaviors	Positive competitiveness Respectful and honest relationships Waiver in behavior
	Facilitating communication skills and channels	Communicating Face-to-face and physical presence of managers among employees Communicating in virtual and electronic networks Non-verbal communication and body language Communicating in virtual and electronic networks giving feedback
	Attention to moral and ideological principles	Compliance with ethical principles and practices Religious and spiritual beliefs

1. Personal and professional characteristics

From the participants' point of view, the personality trait of being extroverted and the professional traits of a high level of work and management experience were effective in interpersonal relationships. Professional experiences and skills provide the possibility of transferring people's experiences and creating better working and interpersonal relationships. This concept was explained in the form of "extraversion personality" and "high work experiences and records".

1-1 Personality characteristics of extraversion

According to the participants, personality affected the behavior of people and their interpersonal relationships. A person's tendency to be positive, full of energy, friendly, and socialare the characteristics of extroverted people. In other words, extroverted individuals are enthusiastic and energetic and have more social relationships and interactions.

"…In the work environment, energetic and cheerful people have a good effect on relationships and increase work efficiency" Participant No. 1.

1-2 High work experiences and records

According to the results of the study, the professional characteristics of people, such as work and managerial experience, were important in accelerating the process of work and improving the level of relationships. Greater work experience will lead to greater expertise and skills of a person, especially in relationship management. Sharing positive and negative work experiences between managers and employees, having up-to-date information, and using collective wisdom in solving organizational problems can improve the level of relationships.

"…Transferring positive and negative work experiences of managers to each other can be very effective. Updating the level of knowledge and

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

information is important because when one manager has up-to-date information, while the other one does not have up-to-date information, no good communication is made between them, and the exchange of opinions and use of collective wisdom are ways of solving this issue" Participant No. 2.

2- Facilitator's quality of work life

What can be inferred from the participants' statements is that the quality of work life in terms of the positive and negative attitudes and emotions of employees in the work environment had a great impact on the quality of communication between employees. If the tasks are properly explained and do not overlap, conflicts in the work environment are resolved properly, the employees are supported psychologically and financially, positive organizational attitudes and feelings of satisfaction will be created, and a positive effect will be exerted on the interpersonal relationships between the employees in the workplace, and as a result, their performance will improve.

2-1 Correct explanation of job description

The participants believed that the transparency of the duties would prevent the overlapping of the duties. The overlapping of the tasks causes an increase in the work variety and workload and the resulting work pressure affects the individual's communication.

"…Sometimes, the duties overlap and the task is reworked or not done. The high variety of tasks and a high number of clients affect communication, so the employee can't do a job well and communicate well with people. Also, they decrease the concentration and make it difficult to justify the client" Participant No. 7.

2-2 Ability to resolve conflicts

The participants stated that because personal differences and interpersonal conflicts were unavoidable in the organization, the skill of conflict resolution in the right way could resolve differences and eliminate negative attitudes among people and help the creation of a favorable communication and psychological atmosphere. A participating manager stated the following regarding how to resolve conflicts in the organization and their impact on relationships:

"…When a colleague complains about another colleague, we just listen, we neither reject nor approve. We put the problems on paper, consult with the assistants and higher managers, and find a solution. We invite both of the parties once again and listen to them and then together with the documentation we decide to solve the problem and improve the situation" Participant No. 3.

2-3 Supportive human relationships

This concept expressed the fact that managers' financial and psychological support to employees in the fields of personal and work problems created job satisfaction, led to their participation in activities, and increased the quality of their relationships.

"…Financial support for employees in the field of major problems that require financial support, such as the cost of disease treatment, and emotional connection and support for the employee's family in times of need are among the strengths of interpersonal communication between employees and managers" Participants No. 1.

"…When the employee was not in a good mood, I didn't give him tasks and I talked to him. Actually, everyone is like a wheel of a system. You have to have a good relationship with everyone so that the group reaches its goal" Participant No. 4.

3- Facilitator's organizational structures

This category represents the organizational structure as a system of rules and regulations and common goals and determines the official relationships and levels that exist in the administrative hierarchy and can play a decisive role in creating effective interpersonal communications.

3-1 Compliance with administrative rules and regulations

According to the experiences of the participants, having a reasonable and acceptable behavioral discipline within the framework of the rules and regulations of the organization and following the instructions and regulations of the organization would lead to the creation of unity in the implementation of affairs and cause the least disagreements and conflicts in relationships.

"…First of all, the rules and regulations must be clarified in the relationships between employees and colleagues. If it is based on the regulations, it is easier for them to work. This will not lead to the distortion of work relations because the rules and regulations are clear here and the matter will be resolved. Otherwise, if they solve their issues based on their own wisdom and thoughts, the conflict will even become worse" Participant No. 4.

3-2 Delegating responsibility to employees

Trusting employees and delegating responsibility to individuals who deserve to do something helps to motivate and improve the relationship between employees and the manager.

"…When employees are given a responsibility, motivation increases and it has a good effect on relationships. When I was told to conduct this test because I have conducted it before and it was successful, this full responsibility was motivating for me" Participant No. 1.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

3-3 Having a common goal

The participants considered reaching a common goal as a way to establish a mutual relationship and believed that having a common goal would align activities and make employees contribute as much as possible to meet each other's needs and share their work responsibilities; moreover, it would create coordination, unity, and organizational cohesion, and ultimately, an increase in interpersonal interactions and relationships.

"…If people think they have a common goal and everyone works for a common goal, directed activities will create unity and cohesion between employees and managers" Participant No. 10.

3-4 Compliance with organizational hierarchy

A participant believed that the observance of administrative hierarchy was involved in establishing the type of communication between people and presumed that the administrative and organizational position of people was effective in establishing the type of communication. Most participants believed that most of the communication with superior managers was limited and established formally.

"…I strongly believe in maintaining the hierarchy. As the vice-chancellor of graduate studies of the faculty, I don't correspond with the vice-chancellor of research or education of the university or even with the president of the university. So, I have no relationship and I correspond with the directors of those departments because I believe that correspondence with the vice-chancellor of research or education should only be done by the dean of the faculty. So, I have no relationship with them unless I meet them in a meeting or social gathering which happens rarely or when they want themselves" Participant No. 6.

4- Facilitator's organizational civic behavior

Organizational civic behaviors, as a form of organizational behavior, have positive consequences for both individuals and organizations. The experiences of most of the participants indicated that respectful official relationships, interactions, and cooperation were effective in creating trust and favorable relationships. The participants believed that the manager should create healthy relationships based on the positive competition by creating a friendly environment free from deviant behaviors (e.g., backbiting, quick judgment, and pessimism) and removing deviant behaviors.

4-1 Positive competitiveness

If the employees do not consider each other their competitors and do not take a position against each other, then the organizational atmosphere will be prevented from being poisoned. Usually, one of the factors that lead to negative competition is the limitation of financial resources and the sharing of interests. Therefore, by reducing the share of benefits, competitiveness would also decrease among employees.

"…Employees should not think of each other's strengths as an obstacle to their own progress, and should not worry that if someone works well, he/she will take their place. This feeling and these attitudes will make them drift apart, and therefore, we will fail to reach the goal of training. If the employees are not competitors, they are good with each other. If there is no comparison, the relationships are good" Participants No. 7.

A participant stated the following for avoiding negative competition and improving relationships:

"…If there is a sharing of interests, a person will act in a competitive manner particularly to obtain more benefits, and this competition will turn into a negative competition somewhere. Therefore, reducing the sharing of interests will improve relationships" Participant No. 6.

4-2 Establishing honest and respectful behavior

This subcategory refers to relationships based on respect and honesty, which was repeatedly mentioned by the participants and plays a decisive role in creating trust and social relationships between people. Therefore, the quality of relationships between leaders and subordinates depends on mutual respect and trust.

"…The manager's honesty affects relationships and the employee trusts the manager. For example, if the manager behaves aggressively and the employee believes that this behavior is unintentional and the manager's warning is only to improve the quality of work, and the employee believes this, he will not consider the warning out of hostility" Participant No. 6.

"…Respect is the backbone of communication. It has a positive effect no matter if people are of a higher or lower level" Participant No. 2.

"…The relationship between the experts of each unit should be respectful and friendly. But the higher the rank and position, the more respect and the less friendly relations should be. This means that communication with people outside of one's department should be formal and respectful" Participant No. 8.

4-3 Ignorance of behavior

It means ignoring and neglecting some mistakes and forgiving possible and negligible deviations, which leads to the strengthening of relationships between people in the environment.

A participant stated his experience in ignoring the faults and mistakes of his employee and its effect on fixing the mistakes and improving relationships as follows:

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

"…Ignorance is an important behavior of managers. I had an employee who did not follow social etiquette when speaking. It seemed that he was rude in his relationships. But I saw that he was doing his job very well, so I tried to cover it up. Suppose that one student came and complained about his behavior. I used to condone his one weakness and cover it up. This measure helped the relationships a lot and gradually his behavior improved" Participant No. 4.

5- Facilitator's communication skills and channels

This category expresses the fact that in establishing interpersonal communication, communication skills, channels, and methods have decisive roles in establishing interpersonal communication. Different types of interpersonal communication in the organization are established formally and informally, verbally and non-verbally, face-to-face and non-face-to-face, and individually and in-group between employees and managers. During these communications, the most important criterion for determining the effectiveness of a communication flow is feedback. It means the reaction that the receiver sends to the sender after interpreting and evaluating the message.

5-1 Establishing face-to-face communication and the physical presence of managers among employees

One of the informal communication channels is direct and face-to-face communication between employees and managers. This type of communication is one of the most effective types of communication since more concepts and meanings are transferred between people and the feedback is established well. Body language and non-verbal communication help to convey the message. If the manager is a good listener and deals honestly and sincerely, employees will express their issues and problems more easily, and tough and formal communication will disappear.

"…High-level managers should be continuously present in the employees' workplace and be among the employees. The communication between managers and employees should be increased and the manager should not separate himself from the employees. He should be a good listener. The honest conversation of the manager with the employees, the comfort of the employee with the manager, and employees' expressing of their opinions about issues and problems are formed in face-to-face communication" Participant No. 1.

One of the participants considered face-to-face and physical communication one of his strategies for eliminating formal communication with employees and improving their performance.

"…One of my specific strategies for better communication is physical and field presence in the workplace of employees to check the working conditions of employees. If I had to do something with the chairman of the department, I went to his office. One of my ways of communicating was field presence. The presence in the field would break the ice of formality. In this way, my communication would be better and the looking down approach and the subordinate-superior relationship would disappear, and it helped the advancement of my work" Participant No. 6.

5-2 Establishing group communication in meetings and councils

Group communication in meetings and councils is a type of organizational communication that was mentioned by participants. In these meetings, employees and managers would have better decisions and relationships by consulting and using collective wisdom.

"…It's important to have intimate meetings and a listening ear. When employees have a request, they don't get their own way. But if managers have a convincing answer, it improves communication. Periodic monthly meetings and question-and-answer sessions are helpful in this regard. They give satisfaction. But these meetings are limited due to COVID-19 and it doesn't happen much frequently as before. It hasn't happened for months" Participant No. 7.

5-3 Non-verbal communication and body language

Body language is a kind of non-verbal communication that means the gestures and movements of the body parts in the course of communication. It is effective in emotional relationships and even formal communication and improves the transmission of the message.

"…Body language is important. For example, when a client comes and I am busy with work, my mood may send out negative energy. Or when someone enters, if I'm looking at a mobile phone or a computer, I must look away from them and look at the client" Participant No. 4.

5-4 Communicating in virtual and social networks

The participants believed that although face-to-face and physical communication was still the most effective form of communication, formal written communication through electronic tools, such as office automation and official email, plays an effective role in speeding up sending messages and increasing their accuracy and is considered one of the most common official communication tools. Virtual reality is used in most administrative units, especially during the pandemics of COVID-19, to establish formal communication, such as rapid notification of administrative and organizational

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

issues, welfare issues, and holding webinars and group meetings, as well as informal issues, such as congratulations and condolences.

"…Administrative automation is also used in our organization. It's great. It makes things easier and avoids confusion. If a letter was referred to someone 10 years ago, the taken action had been indexed there. Before, the letters were on paper and were not recorded. Therefore, it was difficult to find them and the letter reached only one person. But now, several people can see the letter at the same time" Participant No. 1.

"…Sometimes, due to the COVID-19 conditions, face-to-face meetings are held virtually and discussions and consultations are held and decisions are made" Participant No. 5.

5-5 Giving feedback

From the point of view of the participants, feedback, either positive or negative, was considered a very effective factor in communicating, advancing work, and meeting people's satisfaction since it enabled the feedback giver to evaluate the effectiveness of his message and performance. They believed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the decrease in face-to-face communication between staff and students in the educational environment, the feedback had decreased as well.

"…Feedbacks and friendships are established during the communication with the employees under my supervision. We have to have empathetic communication with the employees, help to progress the student's affairs, and if there is a problem, give feedback to each other and prevent dissatisfaction" Participant No. 7.

6- Paying attention to moral and ideological principles

This category deals with the impact of religious attitudes and beliefs and moral principles on interpersonal relationships. What can be inferred from the participants' statements is that people who have religious beliefs or perform religious practices have mental health and adaptability and are more flexible in difficult situations. A stronger religious attitude of the people would lead to greater adherence to the organization's values and principles. Compliance with values and ethical standards is highly important in reducing tensions and leads to the creation of an ethical environment in the organization, which results in employee satisfaction and favorable and effective interpersonal relationships. This category consisted of two subcategories, including observing moral principles and values and religious and spiritual beliefs.

6-1 Religious and spiritual beliefs

Religious beliefs can increase people's adaptability. Religion and faith are among the basic and main aspects of individual concepts, in such a way that it prohibits people from deviating in the work environment. Aversion to religion, lack of practical commitment to religious beliefs, and distance from spiritual life are among the main reasons for the decrease in constructive intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. A participant stated:

"…High spiritual forces can still maintain energy despite facing such behaviors as the lack of secrecy in relationships and lack of visibility at work" Participant No. 1.

"…The manager must be committed. The manager must consider himself a believer and a person of faith. A believer does not do wrong, and this affects communication. I mustn't ruin someone's right if I'm recommending someone else. If I do something out of routine, I have to circumvent the law. This is not acceptable" Participant No. 3.

6-2 Compliance with ethical principles and values

In relation to the impact of ethical principles and frameworks and human and organizational values on employee interpersonal relationships, a participant stated:

"…In relationships with colleagues, I think that colleagues should know what the manager's red line is. At the same time that we are friends, we respect each other's status and observe wide red lines" Participant No. 3.

"…Human values should govern relationships, not the positions of individuals. There is a series of equal human values in all. Human values don't decrease or increase by becoming a boss, but unfortunately, it is embedded in the administrative hierarchy that whoever is the boss is also higher in terms of social status, which will cause limited communication" Participant No. 6.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the facilitators of interpersonal relationships between managers and teaching staff of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences. Based on the results of the study, interpersonal communication facilitators were organized into six categories of personal and professional characteristics, quality of work life, organizational structure, organizational civic behaviors, communication skills and channels, and religious beliefs and moral principles and values.

Personal characteristics and professional experiences are among the components of the facilitator of the interpersonal relationships between administrators and educational staff and increase social interactions and strengthen interpersonal relationships. This finding was in line with the

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

results of a study conducted by Hassan et al. entitled "The Influence of Personality Traits on Communication Competence" (18). The results of their study to identify the relationship between personality traits and communication competence among university students in Malaysia showed that extroversion had a positive effect on communication competence. The findings of a study by Hashemieh et al. entitled "Investigating the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Marital Satisfaction Based on the Big Five Personality Factor Model: A Systematic Review" also indicated that extroversion was associated with positive emotions, such as being energetic, optimistic, affection, and intimacy (19). Managers can try to understand different aspects of people's personality traits and deal with them according to their dominant personality; as a result, people's job satisfaction will increase.

Damghanian and Roozban conducted a study entitled "Identifying the Factors Affecting an Insurance Company's Agent Communication Apprehension Based on Participant Selection Mixed Method", the results of which showed that the lack of information and experience of insurance agents had an effect on their communication avoidance in relation to customers (20). Azimi Loleti et al., in a study entitled "Experience of Professional Communication Among Nurses Working in Educational Hospitals" announced that up-to-date knowledge and skills were effective in managing interactions (21). Therefore, by recognizing and appreciating professional expertise, experiences, and skills and developing talents, the field of transfer of employees' experiences, professional communication, and as a result, interpersonal communication will be improved.

The results of the study showed that the improvement of the quality of life indicators from the aspect of correct explanation and clarification of tasks had a great impact on the satisfaction of people, and consequently, on increasing the quality of communication between employees. The correct definition of duties makes both the person and the clients aware of the description of the duties of the employees and adjust their expectations and behavior. The overlapping of duties causes an increase in the task variety and workload and the resulting work pressure causes mental, physical, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction and will lead to stressful interactions. The findings of studies conducted by Shams Ghafarokhi et al. entitled "Relation Between the Physical Conditions of the Work Environment and Work Pressure with Job Satisfaction" and Kahnouji entitled "Investigation of the Relationship Between Assertiveness and Empathy of Faculty Members with Managerial Positions" showed that high variety and volume of work led to a decrease in job satisfaction (22, 23). The results of the study by Damghanian and Roozban, mentioned above, also revealed high workload as one of the reasons for communication avoidance (20).

Another dimension of the quality of work life is the ability to resolve conflicts in the workplace. Differences in attitudes, ways of thinking, and perceptions cause conflicts between people and lead to negativity. In a study titled "Representation of Conflict Management Styles and Conflict Resolution Strategies in the Holy Quran", Seifaliei et al. considered negotiation, mediation, and arbitration effective in resolving conflicts and improving human relations from the perspective of the Holy Quran (24).

Adherence to the administrative hierarchy and compliance with the organizational rules and regulations lead to the creation of unity in the implementation of affairs and cause the least conflict and contradictions in relationships, and as a result, strengthen relationships. This finding was consistent with the results of the study by Hashemiyeh et al. (19). The results of a study by Koonmee et al. entitled "Ethics Institutionalization, Quality of Work Life, and Employee Job-Related Outcomes" showed that compliance with rules and regulations was effective in creating job satisfaction (25). This finding was inconsistent with the results of the study by Damghanian and Roozban, which emphasized that inflexible insurance laws made insurance agents avoid communication with customers (20).

Having a common goal is another factor of organizational structure that facilitates communication. If the goals are clearly defined and the employees know what they are trying for, organizational productivity and interpersonal communication will be effective. In organizations, everyone interacts with each other to achieve a common goal. The results of research by Koonmee et al. indicated that having a common goal made the activities to be aligned and employees made necessary contributions to meet each other's needs and shared their work responsibilities, and this created harmony, unity, and organizational cohesion, and eventually, led to an increase in interpersonal interactions and relationships (25).

Organizational civic behavior is one of the enhancers of interpersonal relationships that have positive consequences for both individuals and organizations and helps to establish a relationship between a person and the organization's goals and strengthen task behaviors. The experiences of most of the participants showed that respectful formal relationships at all organizational levels and

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

observing justice and fairness were effective in creating trust and favorable relationships. This finding was in line with the results of a study by Pipas and Jaradat research entitled "Assertive Communication Skills" (26). Thiagarajan et al. in a study entitled "Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Its Definitions and Dimensions" also reached the conclusion that citizenship behaviors were effective in creating satisfaction in employees (27). By creating a friendly environment free of deviant behaviors, managers can establish healthy relationships based on positive competition and prevent tension in relationships.

Choosing the appropriate communication channels and methods is considered among the facilitators of the interpersonal communication of employees. This finding confirmed the results of a study by Mehrali in his doctoral thesis entitled "The Role of Effective Communication Management in Iran's Automotive Industry and Presenting the Model" (28). Moreover, one of the methods of establishing informal communication is direct and face-to-face communication between employees and managers. This type of communication is one of the most effective communications because more concepts and meanings are transferred between people and proper feedback is given. In face-to-face communication, employees express their issues and problems more easily and formal communication disappears. This finding was in line with the results of studies by Ozsaker et al. (29) and Damghanian et al. (30); however, it was inconsistent with the findings of the study by Damghanian and Roozban (20). Their findings indicated that people were more likely to avoid communication in face-to-face communication than in virtual networks.

Group communication in meetings and councils is a type of organizational communication that was mentioned by the participants. Eskandari and Ghassabi Khoshe Mehr have also mentioned this in the findings of their research entitled "An Investigation of the Effective Factors Enhancing the Interactional Skills of Commanders with Soldiers Affiliated to the Military Training Centers of the Ground Force of Iranian Army" (3). In this type of communication, thinking, reasoning, active listening, interpersonal cooperation and empathy, and increasing social skills, interaction, and cooperation were promoted between employees and managers by creating a feeling of belonging to a group. In these meetings, gatherings, and group communication, interpersonal relations are also improved by consulting and using collective wisdom and better decisions for the common issue.

Body language is a kind of non-verbal communication, which through gestures and body movements, helps to better understand and interpret the message, feelings, and meanings in the course of verbal communication. This type of communication is efficient in emotional relationships and even official communication of persons and helps to transfer and complete verbal communication. This finding was in line with the results of studies by Oppong and Birikorang as well as Karimi and Shariati (31, 32).

One of the tools for establishing interpersonal communication in organizations is communication through virtual social networks. Martin and MacDonald in their research entitled "Using Interpersonal Communication Strategies to Encourage Science Conversations on Social Media" and Chan et al. in a study entitled "Usage of WhatsApp and Interpersonal Communication Skills among Private University Students" considered communication in the virtual network an encouraging strategy of interpersonal communication, which caused comprehensive interaction in terms of the number of comments and unique people, the use of content, selfies, and videos, and responses to audience comments (33, 34).

The participants believed that although face-to-face and physical communication was still the most effective communication, interpersonal communication in virtual networks and intra-organizational internet networks were highly important, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic and was a solution for expanding the scope of interpersonal communication. Hamik and Lee, quoting Damghanian and Roozban, emphasized that people experienced less communication avoidance in virtual networks (20). In most official departments, especially during the outbreak of COVID-19, virtual networks were used to make official communications, such as quick administrative and organizational announcements, welfare issues, and holding webinars and group meetings, as well as for unofficial cases, such as congratulations and condolences.

Positive and negative feedback, as the most important criteria for determining the effectiveness of a communication flow, are considered one of the boosters of establishing interpersonal communication and the factor in advancing work and creating satisfaction because in establishing interpersonal communication, the reaction that the receiver sends to the sender after interpreting and evaluating the message makes the person become aware of the results of his behavior. This finding confirmed the results of research by Kelly et al. (35).

According to the participants, most of the communication feedbacks were formed in face-to-

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

face communication; however, nowadays, due to the spread of COVID-19, most of the communication is formed in a non-face-to-face manner, and as a result, the feedbacks have also decreased.

It is important to pay attention to moral and ideological principles in terms of the influence of religious attitudes, religious beliefs, and moral principles on interpersonal relationships. Orientation towards religion and spirituality and practical commitment to religious beliefs are considered a type of personality adaptation that has a great impact on people's mental health and causes adherence and attention to moral values in such a way that they prevent people from doing some wrong activities in the work environment and is effective in reducing tensions, creating a moral atmosphere, and increasing employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. Zhang in his research entitled "Intercultural Communication and Religious Beliefs", and Croucher et al. in their research thesis entitled "Religion, Culture, and Communication" also found the existence of a relationship between religious beliefs and ways of communicating (36). The findings of a study by Zhang indicated that people who had strong religious beliefs were better adapted to the situation and had less anxiety and physical complaints and a higher sense of peace (37).

Conclusion

According to the results, personal and professional characteristics, quality of work life, organizational structure, organizational civic behaviors, communication skills and channels, religious beliefs, and moral principles and values were effective factors in consolidating and strengthening interpersonal relationships between educational managers and staff. What is highly important in strengthening interpersonal relationships is to create relationships based on respect, trust, and honesty. Managers and employees can encourage such behaviors through modeling organizational civic behaviors and promoting behavioral competencies since subordinates have a great desire to imitate the behavior of leaders and of those whom they have chosen as role models. Furthermore, recognizing the different aspects of people's personality, showing appropriate behavior according to the dominant personality of people, creating opportunities for continuous growth and development of individual abilities of employees, and providing the foundation for the application and transfer of their acquired experiences and skills are among the other strategies. Improving the indicators of the quality of work life and adopting logical principles and procedures, including defining and clarifying job descriptions of employees and managers, finding the roots and managing contradictions and conflicts, showing supportive behaviors, creating dignity and peace of mind for the employees, and bring them satisfaction and motivation.

According to the type of study and sampling method, the generalizations of the results of this study should be performed with caution. The use of semi-structured interviews to collect data, considering the executive position of some of the participants in the study, was also one of the limitations of the present study. Considering that the participants in this study were in direct contact with the students, it is suggested to investigate the opinions and experiences of the students in future studies. It is also recommended to repeat the study in similar samples and larger sample sizes.

Ethical considerations

This research was the result of a doctoral thesis approved by the Islamic Azad University of Zanjan, Iran. The rights of the participants and the confidentiality of the results were respected in the study.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank the participants of the study who helped to advance the goal of the study with their sincere cooperation. They would also like to appreciate the Vice President of Research and Technology of Islamic Azad University, Zanjan branch, and the officials of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, for their support in conducting this study. In addition, the research team would like to thank Dr. Minasadat Hashemiparast for her valuable advice in the research.

This article was taken from the approved doctoral thesis submitted to the Islamic Azad University, Zanjan branch.

Contribution

Shahla Moradi, the main researcher, data design and collection, extraction, analysis, and interpretation of the results, and writing the first version of the article. Manijeh Zikriarii and Mohammad Masoud Vakili, study design, supervision and guidance of the research, analysis of the results, and supervision of the implementation of the research, edition of the first version of the article. All authors read and approved the initial and final versions of the article.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

References

1. Singh A K, ILalropuii. Role of Interpersonal Communication in Organizational Effectiveness. Int J Res Manag Bus Stud. 2014; 1: 36-9.
2. Damghanian H, Rastegar AA, Yazdani Ziarat M. Designing and explaining competency models in organizational interpersonal communication. Management Studies in Development and Evolution, 2018; 27 (88): 143- 174. [https://doi.org/10.22054/JMSD.2018.8930]. (Persian)
3. Gassabi Khoshe Mehr N, Eskandari K. an Investigation of the Effective Factors Enhancing the Interactional Skills of Commanders with Soldiers Affiliated to the Military Training Centers of the Ground Force of Iranian Army. A Research Quarterly in Military Management. 2015; 15 (57): 1-22. (Persian)
4. Yazdani E, Soleimanpouromran M. The Relationship between Communication Skills and Quality of Teaching in University Lecturers from the Viewpoint of Medical Students. JNKUMS. 2018; 9(4): 82-89. [https://doi.org/10.29252/nkjmd-090412] (Persian)
5. Fallah Madvari R, Malakou – tikhah M, Abbasi balochkhane F, Rabiei H, Jalali Ardekani M. Relationship between Workplace Noise Exposure and Worker's Communication Skills among Miners in Iran: A Cross - Sectional Study. J Occup Hyg Eng. 2021; 7(4): 8-15. [https://doi.org/10.29252/johe.7.4.8] (Persian)
6. Haddadi A, Ebrahimi M E. The Effect of Yalom Group Therapy on Resiliency and Communication Skills in Students Health Res. J. 2020; 5 (3) :188-198 [https://doi.org/10.29252/hrjbaq.5.3.188] (Persian)
7. Gyotaj H, Moghly A. Investigating the relationship between the communication skills of managers and the performance of employees in the police command of Bandar Abbas city. PMSQ. 2016; 12(3): 451-476. (Persian)
8. Malikian N, Rashid Haji H. Examining the communication skills of managers with organizational transformation "case study of the presidential institution". Sociological Researches Quarterly 2018; 12(3&4): 79-92. (Persian)
9. Okoro E, Washington MC, Thomas O. The impact of interpersonal communication skills onorganizational effectiveness and social self-efficacy: A synthesis. (IJLL). 2017; 4(3): 28-32.
10. Nazari R, Ehsani M, Ashraf Ganjavi F, Ghasemi H. The effects of communication skills and interpersonal communication on the organizational effectiveness of Iranian sports managers and model presentation. Sports Management Studies (Research in Sports Science). 2012; 4(16): 157-173. (Persian)
11. Nazari R, Rezaei F, Hadi Tip H. Relationship between communication skills and social capital in sports organizations of Hamadan province and model presentation. Sports Management Journal. 2018; 10 (1): 33-48. [https://doi.org/10.22059/jsm.2018.42152.1047] (Persian)
12. Nwabueze U, Mileski J. Achieving competitive advantage through effective communication in a global environment. Journal of International Studies. 2018;11(1):50-66. [https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2018/11-1/4]
13. Yang Y, Wang Q. The Effect of Balint-style Group on Empathy Ability and Interpersonal Communication Skills of Rehabilitation Students. Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research.2022; 670: 24-9. [https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220704.006]
14. Franco CAGS, Franco RS, Ceratti Lopes JM, Severo M, Ferreira M A. Clinical communication skills and professionalism education are required from the beginning of medical training - a point of view offamily physicians. BMC Medical Education. 2018; 18:43. 8) 18:43. [https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1141-2]
15. Vakili M M, Hidarnia A R, Niknami S. Development and Psychometrics of an Interpersonal Communication Skills Scale (A.S.M.A) among Zanjan Health Volunteers. Hayat Journal. 2012; 18(1): 5-19. (Persian)
16. Corbin J, Strauss A. Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory: SAGE Publications; 2008.
17. Lincoln Y, Guba E. Naturalistic Inquiry. California: Sage Publication; 1985, 105-17.
18. Hassan N, Sumardi N, Aziz RA. The influence of personality traits on communication competence. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences. 2019; 9(13): 493-505. [https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i13/6999]
19. Hashemieh ch, Ozgoli G, Abolmaali Kh, Nasiri M. The relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction based on five factors model of personality: A systematic review. SJKU. 2017; 22 (5): 121-132. (Persian)
20. Damghanian H, Roozban F. Identifying the factors affecting the disconnection of Iranian insurance agents based on a mixed plan for selecting a participant. Insur Res J. 2017; 31 (3) (Series 123): 45-66. [https://doi.org/10.22056/jir.2017.41374] (Persian)
21. Azimi Lolti H, Ash Torab, Bagheri Nesami M, Bagherzadeh Ledari R. Professional communication experience of nurses working in teaching hospitals: a phenomenological study. J Mazand Univ Med Sci. 2011; 21 (85) .180-125. (Persian)
22. Shams Ghahfarokhi M, Ghasemi M, Shams Ghahfarokhi F. The relationship between physical environment and work stress with job satisfaction. Tibbi-i-kar Research Center of Industry Related Diseases. 2021; 13 (2) :40-51. [https://doi.org/10.18502/tkj.v13i2.7040] (Persian)
23. Kahnoji m. Investigating the relationship between assertiveness and empathy of faculty members with managerial positions (Case study: Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan). Modiriat Farda Journal. 2017; 51 (16): 194-203. (Persian)
24. Seifalii F, Morovati S, Hoseini Nia M. Representation of management styles and conflict resolution strategies in the Holy Quran. Journal of Social Work. 2018; 5 (17):

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]

151-190. [https://doi.org/10.22054/rjsw.2018.11896] (Persian)
25. Koonmee K, Singhapakdi A, Virakul B, Lee D-J. Ethics institutionalization, quality of work life, and employee job-related outcomes: A survey of human resource managers in Thailand. Journal of Business Research. 2010; 63(1): 20-26. [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.01.006]
26. Pipas MD, Jaradat M. Assertive communication skills. Annales Universitatis Apulensis: Series Oeconomica. 2010; 12(2): 649-656.
27. Thiagarajan T, Isravel YAD, Durairaj A. Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Its Definition and Dimension. 2017: 46- 55.
28. Mehr Ali H. The role of effective communication management in the Iranian automotive industry and model presentation: Allameh Tabatabai University; 2011. (Persian)
29. Ozsaker M, Ozkutuk N, Orgun F. A study of the organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational communications of teachers: Case study of Aydin Province. African Journal of Business Management. AJBM. 2012; 6(29): 8659-66. [https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM12.048]
30. Damghanian H, Rastegar A, Yazdani Ziarat M. Designing and explaining the competency model in organizational interpersonal communication. Management Studies in Development and Evolution. 2018; 27 (88): 143-74. [https://doi.org/10.22054/JMSD.2018.8930] (Persian)
31. Adu-Oppong AA, Agyin-Birikorang E. Communication in the workplace: Guidelines for improving effectiveness. Global journal of commerce & management perspective. 2014; 3(5): 208-13.
32. Karami M, Shariati S, Esmaihi M. Examining the principles of interpersonal relationships based on the moral-social teachings of Surah Al-Hujurat and modeling the content of these teachings. Quarterly Journal of Educational Psychology. 2013; 9 (29): 135-73. [https://doi.org/10.22054/JEP.2013.6105] (Persian)
33. Martin C, MacDonald BH. Using interpersonal communication strategies to encourage science conversations on social media. PLOS One. 2020; 15(11): e0241972.
34. Chan TJ, Yong WK, Harmizi A. Usage of WhatsApp and interpersonal communication skills among private university students. Journal of Arts & Social Sciences. 2020; 3(2): 15-25.
35. Kelly S, Graham L, MacDonald, P.Graham L, Goke R. Organizational citizenship behaviors as influenced by supervisor communication: The role of solidarity and immediate behaviors. Business Communication Research and Practice. 2018; 1(2): 61-9. [https://doi.org/10.22682/bcrp.2018.1.2.61]
36. Croucher S, Zeng C, Rahmani D, Sommier M. Religion, Culture, and Communication. In J. Nussbaum (Ed.), Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. Oxford University Press. [https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.16]
37. Zhang X. Intercultural Communication and Religious Beliefs-A Case Study of the American Film“ Innocence of Muslims”. Int. j. arts commer. lit. 2013; 2(2): 7-12.

Shahla Moradi, Manizheh Zakaryaei, Mohammad Masoud Vakili. Explaining interpersonal communication facilitators in educational managers and staff at the university of medical sciences: a qualitative study. J Med Educ Dev. 2022; 15(46): 41-53.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-09]

[DOI: 10.52547/edcj.15.46.41]