

THE IMPACT OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS ON JOB SATISFACTION OF FRONT LINE MANAGERS

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Abstract - The main objective of this research is to examine the impact of interpersonal communication skills on job satisfaction of front line managers in FMCG sector. Further, the main aim of the research is to discuss the impact of interpersonal communication skills on job satisfaction of front line managers in FMCG Sector. Observations and interviews conducted showed that the front line managers are not using their maximum potential in doing their jobs and the main reason we identified is lack of proper interpersonal communication skills. Considering the evidence available on literature reviews, we learned that there is a rapport between interpersonal communication skills and job satisfaction.

Based on the literature reviews, we identified determinants of interpersonal communication skills such as, cultural communication barriers, tone of voice, power skills and so on. Furthermore, we identified methods that can improve their interpersonal communication skills by themselves from the literature reviews such as improving listening skills and conversational skills. Thus, we found ways they can improve their interpersonal communication skills, that companies provided from the interviews conducted with the front line managers. This study is done using a sample of 439 Front line managers from four different companies. The data was collected through questionnaires, observations and interviews. The collected data was then analyzed by using quantitative techniques. Finally, we concluded by emphasizing that there is an impact of interpersonal communication skills on job satisfaction of front line managers. This research will help the organizations to improve frontline manager's interpersonal communication skills and thus enhance their job satisfaction as well as the organizational victory.

Keywords - Interpersonal Communication Skills, Job Satisfaction, Front Line Manager

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

An interpersonal Communication skill can be defined as the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages (SkillsYouNeed.com, 2019). To fabricate connections and build bonds, fruitful Interpersonal Communication skills are a vital factor as individuals who have strong Interpersonal Communication skills are successful as a person and a specialist. Interpersonal communication skills embrace of competences and features connected with comprehension and demonstrating an individual's sentiments or by understanding and controlling others emotions (SkillsYouNeed.com, 2019).

General objective

General objective of this research is to examine the impact of interpersonal communication skills on job satisfaction of front line managers in FMCG sector.

Specific objectives

Specific objectives of the research can be listed as follows:

- i) To investigate the impact of interpersonal communication skills on job satisfaction of the front line managers.
- ii) To identify the determinants and the current Interpersonal Communication skill level of the front line managers.

- iii) To determine the methods to enhance interpersonal communication skills of the front line managers

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal communication means the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal and non-verbal communication. Communication is a necessary thing in an organization. Without having good communication, management is unable to make decisions related to the organization and supervisors would not be able to give instructions to employees (Husain, 2013). The connection between employees' motives for communicating with superiors and co-workers, their commitment to their organizations, satisfaction with jobs, and with superiors which showed the strong relationships between the control, affection, inclusion, escape and relaxation motives and revealed a relationship between the motives along with satisfaction and commitment (Tamer A. Award, Suhaila E. Alhashemi, 2012).

Moreover, turn up determine to what extent organizations specifically use communication skills as a key criterion in their selection and subsequent development of managerial staff and it suggested that HR practitioners regard communication skills as included under a generic idea of leadership. There

were no specific programs reported that clearly targeted communication skills (Mary Bambacas, Margaret Patrickson, 2009).

Furthermore, an article shows up principles of an organizational communication framework, which can serve as a facilitator of a positive diversity climate, which in turn could enhance the integration of locals into the expatriate-dominated workforce of the United Arab Emirates (Valerie Priscilla Goby, Emily David, 2015).

Additionally uncovered, one of the most challenging aspects of a sales manager's job is to secure talented salespeople to fill the ranks of his or her sales force. The greater the skill used in evaluating potential salespeople, the more effective will be the hiring process; effectiveness being measured by lower turnover and greater productivity over an extended period of time (Michael K. Rich, Daniel C. Smith, 2000).

As well, disclose negotiation is an important part of relationship development, but salespeople's negotiating styles are influenced by culture and the ability to adapt to the cultures of specific markets and specific customers. This study proposes a simple conceptual model of how cultural issues at three different levels – national organizational and individual – influence salespeople's negotiating styles (Sunanta Chairakeo, Mark Speece, 2004).

The success of participative decision-making strategy requires that lower-level employees be both willing and able to communicate their opinions in a manner that will be persuasive to others. Team member assertiveness helps to ensure that each individual's unique knowledge, skills, ideas, and observations are recognized as resources that are available to a team. This involves a range of behaviors including: providing performance feedback to a team member, addressing perceived abilities and potential problems, stating and maintaining opinions, offering potential solutions, initiating action, offering and requesting assistance or backup when needed (Kimberly A. Smith, Eduardo Salas, 2006). Culturally adaptive behaviors are founded in the idea that cultural adaptation will lead to perceptions of similarity and in turn interpersonal attraction. The similarity–attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) is a general theory for studies of organizational demography. It argues that people tend to be attracted to and influenced by those whom they perceive to be similar to them. Thus, employees are more likely to be influenced by members of their group who are more similar to them in terms of salient demographic characteristics (George P. Huber, Prithviraj Chattopadhyay, 2002). Complex problem solving is the successful interaction with the task environment that is dynamic, that is change as a function of user's intervention

and/or as a function of time and in which some if not all of the environment's regularities can only be revealed by successful exploration and integration of information gained in that process (Buchner, 1995). Furthermore, effective organizational communication relies on management's ability to receive, transmit and act on information presented to them. More specifically, it is middle managers' responsibility to effectively communicate with upper management, peers and subordinates, and to maintain communication flow within an organization. However, poor communication results in poor performance and quality of care (Daphne G Harber, Neal M. Ashkanasy, 1998), poor collaboration and teamwork, and poor commitment from leaders (Suzi Robertson-Malt, Ysanne Chapman, 2008).

As well in 1991 highlighted the majority of our time is spent communicating with others so we must develop effective skills, hence most important skill is the ability to listen. We must be able to adopt the other person's perspective in order to fully understand the message being sent. Because all meaning resides in people not in words, the ability to empathize with the sender is particularly valuable. The other significant aspect of communication is the non-verbal message. Non-verbal communication represents 55 per cent of the message and must be conveyed accurately in order to be effective. The verbal message must agree with the non-verbal message if we are to have credibility. We must know ourselves, monitor our performance, and strive for accuracy and honesty in what we say and do (Sandra G. Garside, Brian H. Kleiner, 1991). Salespersons directly deal with customers. They need to communicate with customers, identify problems related to the products, solve them and keep good relationship with customers. In order to do those tasks, salespeople should have strong listening skills with their customers because they are the people who add value to the organization. Salesperson with good listening skills is an asset to the company. They can add value to the business through gathering information about problems relating to products, give recommendation about the product to customers while keeping trust and perceived (Shepherd & Castleberry, Linking effective listening with salesperson performance: an exploratory investigation, 1997). Direct salesperson should have good conversational skills to understand customer requirements. Through asking questions, they collect data about their customers' needs and wants. Salespersons' good conversational skills may lead to maintaining long-term customer relationships, thus customers feel that salesperson respond to their requirements by asking questions. Therefore, customers may be willing to continue the business with the relevant salesperson. Conversational skills are the basic need for a salesperson. When managers recruit people as salesperson, they focus on conversation and eye contact of them. Because they

want to know whether these people can engage in non-verbal communication (Ramsey & Sohi, Listening to Your Customers: The Impact of Perceived Salesperson Listening Behavior on Relationship Outcomes , 1997), (Aggarwal & Castleberr, 2015), (Shepherd, Castleberry, & Ridnour, Linking effective listening with salesperson performance: an exploratory investigation, 1997).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research problem correlated between personality and the academic performance of the undergraduates. This mainly focuses about the personality factors like Openness, sociable, talkative, in big five personality traits as independent variables and academic performance of undergraduates as a dependent variable. Data collecting method used for this research is conducting a survey questionnaire, which is a quantitative approach.

Research Instrument

Primary data gathered by handover a paper based structured questionnaire for frontline managers and collect 439 responses from them. Section 1, which is the first part of the questionnaire, consists of the personnel information of the respondents while Section 2, the second part of the questionnaire consists of questions to measure current level of interpersonal communication skills. Section 3, the third part of the questionnaire consists of questions to identify the determinants of interpersonal communication skills and Section 4, the fourth part of the questionnaire consists of questions related to job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

To find out Interpersonal communication skills above mentioned are regress with the job satisfaction using multiple regression analysis in this research and also determine the total contribution of the Interpersonal communication skill as predictors to job satisfaction.

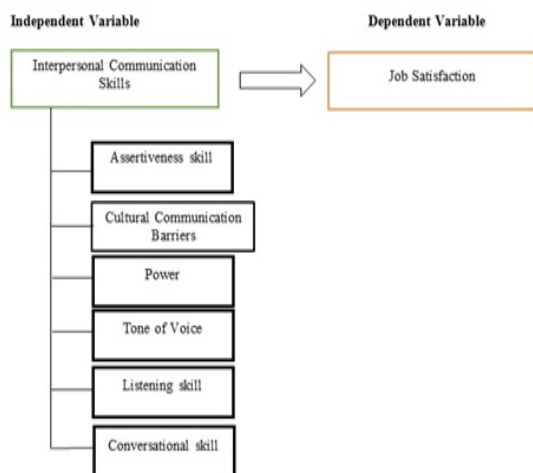


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

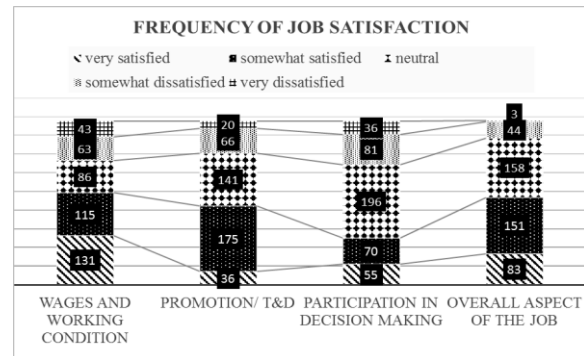


Table 1: Frequency of Job Satisfaction

Moreover, according to employee job satisfaction and engagement report prepared by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), it emphasized that employees who say they are fulfilled with their current work took an enormous significance rising from 81% in 2013 to 88% in 2016. (Society for Human Resource Management, 2017) The moving forward economy was one figure within the high level of fulfillment, since managers have been more willing and able to boost pay rates, benefits and advantages for their employees. Moreover, as the employment showcase stabilized work, searchers took advantage of modern openings for positions that best fit their abilities and interface. Most companies endeavor for representative fulfillment, but not all accomplish this objective. That is why it's critical for human asset experts to know more, almost all the components that can increment worker fulfillment, and how it fits into a company's general victory. As such situation rendering to the FMCG industry, front line managers among the population 131 out of 439 employees are very satisfied with the wages and working conditions. Therefore, it is considerable fewer portions from the sample. As an average of salary, job security, workload, flexible working hours and physical working environment, researchers can ascertain the overall occurrence of the wages and working conditions of the front line managers, which is directly connected to the job satisfaction. Nevertheless, significantly very less amount of front line managers were very satisfied with the promotion/ training and development of their career, which are 36 out of 439 employees. As an average of opportunity for advancement, job security, ability to influence decisions that affect you, ability to influence day-to-day company success, opportunity to work with interesting projects and access to company-sponsored training & seminars. Researchers can ascertain the overall occurrence of the promotion/ training and development of the front line managers, which is directly connected to the job satisfaction. Considering the participation to the

decision-making, most of the front line managers 196 out of 439 employees, most of them were having neutral opinion. Furthermore, when entailing with the overall aspect of the job 158 and 151 out of 439 front line managers, they had neutral and somewhat satisfied opinions.

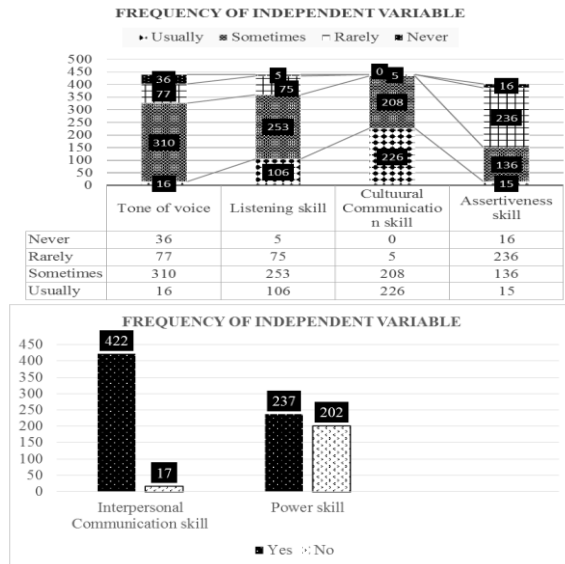


Table 2: Frequency of the Independence Variables

Furthermore, in view of the frequency of the tone of voice among the 439, 70.6% of front line managers marked “sometimes” where the tone of voice influences the selling of goods most of the time. As well as 3.6% of front line managers, 16 out of 439 front line managers noticeably ensure that tone of voice influence their job satisfaction. Meanwhile 17.5% of population signify that tone of voice rarely impact on the job performance. As per the descriptive statistics and occurrence of the sample population it is proven that tone of voice sometimes impact on the job satisfaction of the front line managers through the observation regarding how interpersonal communication skills used by the front line managers with the customers also. As per the frequency of the listening skill factor, among 439 front line managers 57.6% agreed as “somewhat” for listening skills, which is more important when selling goods for the customers. Though they emphasized listening skill as somewhat influence on the job satisfaction of front line managers, by interviews conducted with front line managers it highlighted without proper listening skills they could not satisfy their customers properly. Therefore, as they mentioned listening skill is the most important skill that they need to have. Thus, most of the frontline managers underlined that listening skill is one of the methods that they can improve the interpersonal skills by themselves. Moreover, when focusing on the observation done with front line managers on how they use interpersonal communication skills with managers and the customers, in both situations they have to use listening skills appropriately. Since without proper listening skills they could not satisfy their customers

and in other hand without properly listening to the managers they could not recognize what they have to do and what are the strategies they have to follow in order to satisfy their job.

Comparing to the descriptive statistics and frequency of conversational skill, among 439 population highest number of front line managers specified as 51.5% that they usually use conversational skills. Besides from that, 47.4% of the population exposed that they use conversational skills somewhat when selling goods. But according to researchers observation related to how they use interpersonal communication skills with their customers, they found that most of the time they didn’t take much time to talk and make conversations with the retailers due to their daily workload. Also, researchers detected that most of the time front line managers did not take much effort to make conversational skill sell the products since the retailers were fully aware about the current product ranges in the FMCG industry. In addition, though front line managers did not use the conversational skills in order to sell current product range to the loyal customers/retailers, if the retailer is new to the marketplace the front line managers have to start a conversation and explain the product to the retailers.

For example, according to the field notes of the observers, a front line manager was well experienced in the FMCG industry as a front line manager for 10 years period. Consequently when a new retailer opens up a retailer shop within his area he somehow ensure that the retailer to be a loyal customer for his company using his enormous conversational skill.

Furthermore, when focusing on the observation done with how they use interpersonal skills with the managers, most of the time front line managers use conversation skills with managers in order to clarify the complications in their performance. By the interviews conducted with the front line managers, researchers discovered conversation skill is the method they use to enhance their interpersonal communication skills individually whereas most of them participate in the peer conversational methods. As well as most importantly researchers noted that in order to use conversational skills with the customers they should have accurate product knowledge since all of them belong to fast moving consumer goods industry.

As per the descriptive statistics described above, when considering the occurrence of the cultural communication skill among the 439 population, 56.5% emphasize that cultural communication barriers rarely impact on job satisfaction. As well as 20% which means 88 out of 439 front line managers, indicate that cultural communication barriers somewhat impact on their job satisfaction. Meanwhile 16.4% of the population said that it does not impact on job satisfaction of them. But as per the researchers’ observation related to how front line managers use interpersonal communication skills with their customers, most of the time when they

have to deal with different ethnic customers, they refuse to use interpersonal communication skills, in terms they use the brand name and booklets provided by the organizations in order to explain the products. In addition to that though the descriptive statistics and rate of recurrence achieve through the questionnaires, it simplifies that they rarely face cultural communication barriers, in practical scenario, they face the cultural barriers drastically. Thus, the researchers' observations related to how front line managers use interpersonal communication skills with their managers, most of the time they use Sinhala language/ English language in order to communicate with their managers.

According to the frequency of the assertiveness skill among population, 53.8% emphasize that assertiveness skills rarely impact on job satisfaction. Meanwhile 36.9% of the population said that it does not impact on job satisfaction of them. According to the observation, it proves that front line managers use assertiveness skills very rarely. Most of the time observers identified that front line managers does not use it because when it comes to the practical scenario, they have to work very patiently with customers and the management style of the distribution point because the whole job achievements depends on how they treat the customers/ retailers. On the other hand, the monthly target achievement totally depend on how the front line managers retain the customers for a long time period, so they refuse to use assertiveness skills most of the time instead of essential situations. Similar to the observation done with how front line managers use interpersonal skills with managers, it also proved that they do not use assertiveness skills with their managers as well.

Besides, in view of the frequency of the power skill/ ability to influence others, among the 439, 54% of front line managers marked "Yes" where they have power skill / ability of influence others. Meanwhile 46% of front line managers, 202 out of 439 front line managers noticeably ensure that they influence their job satisfaction. Significantly from the statistics it proved that the front line managers have sufficient power skill/ ability to influence others, by observation done with front line managers on how they use interpersonal communication skills with customers and managers it was verified that they have less / sometimes no power skills when it comes to the practical scenario. Furthermore associating with descriptive statistics and frequency of interpersonal communication skills, among the population 439, 96.1% of front line managers marked "Agreed" where interpersonal communication skill impacts on selling the goods most of the time and in order to reach job satisfaction ultimately. Even though, 422 out of 439 front line managers agreed as they use interpersonal communication skills in order to extent job satisfaction, thus achieving monthly sales targets. 3.9% among the population, 17 front line managers out of the population disagree as they did not use

interpersonal communication skills in order to sell products as well as did not take into consideration as a factor that reach job satisfaction. According to researchers observation related to how they use interpersonal communication skills with their customers, they found that some front line managers use facial expressions instead of interpersonal communication skills in order to sell products.

For an instance according to the field notes from the researchers they found that one of the front line managers is working as a front line manager in FMCG industry over 4 years period of time. Though he was working over a considerable period in the industry, as front line manager he does not use more interpersonal communication skills in order to sell and explain products to the customers. He used facial expressions and booklets provided by the company which include the details of the products in order to sell goods. When researchers had close conversation with that front line manager, though he does not use much interpersonal communication skills in order to sell products he has achieved annual targets continuously for three years. Therefore, that proved interpersonal communication skills has less impact on job satisfaction

This analysis is conducted to achieve one of the objectives of this study, it is to measure the current interpersonal communication skills level of the front line managers. To achieve that objective "One sample T- Test" was carried by bearing in mind the average score of the interpersonal communication skills data. The below mentioned scale was used to determine the level of interpersonal communication level.

- If Interpersonal Communication Skill < 1 then ICS level is low
- If Interpersonal Communication Skill= 1 then ICS level is moderate
- If Interpersonal Communication Skill > 1 then ICS level is high

| DIMENSION | N | Mean |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Interpersonal Communication Skill | 439 | 1.053 |

Table 0.3: Summary of the One Sample T-Test
Source: SPSS Statistics based on Survey data

| VARIABLE | CRONBACH'S ALPH | R | R SQUARE | B VALUE | CONSTANT AVERAGE | SIG |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------|----------|---------|------------------|-------|
| Interpersonal Communication Skill | 0.868 | 0.563 | 0.304 | 2.858 | 0.299 | 0.948 |
| Tone of voice | 0.772 | 0.573 | 0.328 | 2.313 | 0.514 | 0.392 |
| Listening skill | 0.873 | 0.553 | 0.306 | 1.873 | 0.264 | 0.217 |
| Assertiveness skill | 0.788 | 0.116 | 0.025 | 1.639 | 0.364 | 0.139 |
| Conversational skill | 0.702 | 0.301 | 0.091 | 1.590 | 0.299 | 0.518 |
| Power skill | 0.735 | 0.123 | 0.015 | 2.103 | 0.354 | 0.223 |
| Cultural communication | 0.835 | 0.011 | 0.000 | 3.143 | 0.273 | 0.909 |

Source: SPSS Statistics based on Survey data

Figure 0.2: Statistical figures

Thus according to the above dimension, mean values are somewhat equal to 1. It indicates that there is a moderate interpersonal communication skill level in this sector.

According to the overall results, Considering to the overall Interpersonal communication skill in terms of Job satisfaction, it has positive impact with the Independent variable. FMCG organizations usually organize Interpersonal communications for the Front line managers. Moving on to the Tone of voice it has positive impact with the job satisfaction. Usually Front line managers use high tone of voice for rural area retailers and Managers always guide them to balance tone of voice accordingly. Moreover listening skill positive impact with job satisfaction meanwhile by observation researchers identified they should have proper listening skills to satisfy the customers within the business environment. Furthermore rendering to the assertiveness skill, it has low impact with job satisfaction as well as by observation researcher identified they have to work patiently instead of using assertiveness skill. More often organizations arrange assertiveness skill workshops in order to handle difficult customers. Rendering to cultural communication skill, power skill, and conversational skill it has low positive impact with job satisfaction of front line managers. As well as by observation investigators identified Instead of conversational skill they use facial expressions as well. They have to use less power skill since most of the time distribution points have more power than them. Use relevant language with experience accordingly and by interviews conducted with the front line managers' researcher recognized companies Arrange special cross cultural communication workshops for the front line managers.

Our third objective is to determine the methods to enhance interpersonal communication skills of the frontline managers. To achieve this objective, interview were conducted to identify how they enhance their frontline managers' interpersonal communication skills. Based on interviews there are two methods to enhance frontline managers' interpersonal communication skills:

- Enhanced by individual

“As a salesperson, conversation skills are important to them to deal with customers. However, line managers can't train every salesperson on how they should use conversational skills with customers. We can only guide them to maintain conversation with customers. From organization side, they give product knowledge, which means explaining product features. Product knowledge is an essential skill for a salesperson. Without having knowledge about the product that they are going to sell, salesperson cannot maintain conversation with customers at least one minute. After getting an idea about product features, salesperson should manage to converse with customers. Such as, hold eye contact, use body

language, hold confidence and be mindful. Through that, the trust between both parties will increase. Therefore, salesperson gets more experience and their conversational skills may improve than their first day. Thus, their relationship with customers will get better. Therefore, the majority of retailers are very friendly with salesperson, even if they express their opinions about the product or the company.”
Listening skills is a necessary skill for a salesperson. It is the foundation of our company revenue, because customers ask many questions about the product, give feedback and complaints relating to the product. Listening skills arose by themselves; we can't force another person to listen to him/her. Without good listening skills salesperson can't retain the customers, but they can improve listening skills by themselves. When they are speaking with customers, they can express verbal affirmations such as, 'I understand', 'I know', and 'Thank you'. Always face the customers and give them your attention. Use non-verbal cues when salesperson dealing with customers such as, nodding and having eye contact. Even our employees use these verbal and non-verbal cues to confirm that they are listening to us.”



Figure 0.2: Word Cloud Generator- Methods Used to Enhance Interpersonal Communication Skills by Individuals Based on the Listening Skills

According to area sales managers' interview, conversational skills and listening skills are major skills, which are needed to perform salespersons' job. When a salesperson is dealing with customers, they need good conversational skills to sell the product and good listening skills to take orders and get feedback from customers.

V. CONCLUSION

Through the results of the study, the researcher was able to accomplish the general and the specific objectives. In addition, it was found out that the determinants of interpersonal communication skills that are assertiveness skills, tone of voice, power skills, cultural communication barriers, listening skills and conversational skills of front line managers who are working in the FMCG industry. Further, it can be confirmed that interpersonal communication skills as a whole have a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction. In addition, researchers identified that front line managers can use nonverbal communication skills such as facial expressions instead of interpersonal Communication skills as well.

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