

The Effectiveness of Basic and Advanced Communication Skills Training on the Quality of Interpersonal Relationships and Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The lack of an appropriate behavioral model and the necessary training in the socialization process leads to disruptions in social communications. This study aimed to investigate the effect of basic and advanced communication skills training on the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment among employees of Kimiya Chlor Petrochemical in Shushtar.

Methods and Materials: This quasi-experimental study employed a pretest-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population consisted of the employees of Kimiya Chlor Petrochemical in Shushtar in 2022. Sixty employees were randomly selected and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (each group consisting of 30 individuals). The experimental group received eight sessions of communication skills training, each lasting one and a half hours over four weeks, while the control group did not receive any training. The research instruments included the Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire by Monajemzadeh (2012) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Allen and Meyer (1977). Data were analyzed using covariance analysis and SPSS.22 software.

Findings: The results showed that basic and advanced communication skills training had a significant impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships, organizational commitment, and its components in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: It can be concluded that basic and advanced communication skills training effectively improved the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment among the employees of the petrochemical company.

Keywords: Communication skills training, Quality of interpersonal relationships, Organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

The quality of interpersonal relationships determines the behaviors that employees exhibit both at the workplace and in their private lives (Allen & Eby, 2012). Typically, high-quality relationships with others lead to positive outcomes such as commitment, performance, motivation, innovation, error detection, teamwork, helping others, internal and external organizational communications, reduced absenteeism and conflict, and increased resilience to negative events. Conversely, low-quality relationships among employees have a detrimental impact on these operational aspects of the organization (Dilchert, 2018; Norton et al., 2015). Emotions, feelings, and interpersonal relationships in the organizational environment were initially considered negative factors (Allen, 2006; Kelman, 2006) that could trigger behaviors diverting employees' attention and making them less productive at work (Offermann et al., 2004). Empirical data from one of these studies, conducted by academic researchers over several decades at the beginning of the last century in an industrial sector in the United States, led to the proposal of the human relations theory (Robbins & Judge, 2005). This study highlighted the manifestations of various aspects of human behavior in the organizational environment and their impact not only on individual productivity while performing tasks but also on multiple aspects reflecting human complexity, such as social interactions with others in a similar organizational space (Wilson et al., 2004).

According to Balian (2012), organizations are established to achieve specific objectives. Employee performance becomes crucial to realizing these goals. Roth (2014), aligning with Balian (2012), suggested that one of the business owners' objectives is to make a profit, and the organization's success relies on employee performance: poor performance harms the organization's achievements. It is essential to note that for sustaining employee performance, the concept of organizational communication must be integrated. In this light, the organizational communication network provides possible solutions for actualizing employee performance (Akosi, 2014). In this era of business competition and economic effort, well-organized and effective communication is now more important than ever. It is the foundation on which organizations and businesses stand and is a crucial part of sustainable achievements. Whether sharing information with superiors, colleagues, customers, vendors, or peers, effective communication is essential for employee performance. Whether it is a face-to-

face interaction or a professionally written email exchange, meaningful information necessitates creating a connection that leaves a strong impact (Akosi, 2014).

According to Taiwo and Olamigoke (2006), no interaction between individuals is possible without some form of communication. There is no way to enhance employee performance without communication or interactions with one another. It allows for the continuous sharing of experiences, thoughts, and opinions. Many studies have been conducted on the importance of organizational communication. Such studies include Akbar and Jahanzaib (2012); Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013); however, studies on internal organizational communication and employee performance were very few. Roberts (2017) focused on the importance of relationship quality, including avoiding work, defensive behavior of personnel, or the tendency to recognize their mistakes and accept criticism. Based on a meta-analysis of 161 articles, Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) concluded that conflicts among employees have a negative relationship with job satisfaction, commitment, and performance and are positively related to absenteeism, the intention to leave the job, employee turnover, and unproductive work. Rajins and Verbus (2017) also showed a positive relationship between low-quality relationships (perceived as one-sided exploitation) and inefficient behaviors (Bigdeli & Doroudi, 2021).

Attention to the commitment of the workforce, whether in the public or private sector, is of great importance. Recognizing and maintaining human resources is not merely about retaining individuals in the organization but integrating them with the organization and creating mutual cohesion between the individual and the organization. There are individuals who stay in an organization for many years out of necessity, and in such cases, not only do they not relieve the organization's burden, but if given the opportunity, they place a heavy burden on the organization (Fu, 2014). Staw and Salancik (1977) examined commitment in two dimensions: attitudinal and behavioral. Attitudinal commitment: they defined attitudinal commitment as having organizational identity and participation in the organization. From the perspective of organizational behavior experts, attitudinal commitment is a process through which employees join the organization to be introduced to the organization's goals and values and are willing to maintain membership in the organization. Behavioral commitment: This commitment, developed within the framework of social psychologists' studies, focuses on a process through which an organization member

adopts behavior that is accepted by the organization, not utilizing previous behaviors (Geun & Park, 2019; Macdonald & Levy, 2016; Oyewobi et al., 2012).

Therefore, the lack of an appropriate behavioral model and necessary training in the socialization process leads to disruptions in social communications, resulting in decreased productivity in various areas, especially in professional relationships and performance. To prevent this problem, the methods proposed by psychology and communication sciences can ensure individual and societal survival and make an individual's presence effective in different communities. On the other hand, for biological health, neither emotional mind nor logical mind can be guiding; rather, a better life revolves around the wise mind, which necessitates education. In this context, proper interpersonal communication training can be one of the strategic principles for a healthier and more productive life, depending on the level of training, learning, and application of basic or advanced communication skills, an individual can experience a healthier and more effective life. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question: Does basic and advanced communication skills training impact the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment among employees of Kimiya Chlor Petrochemical in Shushtar?

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This quasi-experimental study employed a pretest-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population consisted of the employees of Kimiya Chlor Petrochemical in Shushtar in 2022, totaling 400 individuals. Questionnaires were distributed among 200 of them, and 60 were randomly selected and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (each group consisting of 30 individuals). The experimental group received eight sessions of communication skills training, each lasting one and a half hours over four weeks, while the control group did not receive any training. The research subjects were selected from those who scored below 65 on the Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire by Monajemizadeh (2012). Inclusion criteria: 1- Being a permanent employee of the company, 2- Not having any specific psychological disorders (confirmed by the company's employee health unit), 3- Scoring below 65 on the Monajemizadeh Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire. Exclusion criteria: 1- Lack of cooperation, 2- Failure to complete

assignments correctly and fully, 3- Absence from more than one training session.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Interpersonal Relationship

The Monajemizadeh Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire (2012) contains 19 questions aimed at measuring the level of interpersonal communication skills in different individuals. The response range is of the Likert type (very low=1, low=2, satisfactory=3, good=4, very good=5). The score range is between 19 and 95, with higher scores indicating better interpersonal communication skills in the respondent. In Monajemizadeh's (2012) thesis, concurrent validity of the questionnaire was calculated, showing a strong correlation with the Effective Communication Ability Questionnaire ($r=0.698$), confirming its concurrent validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method, which typically ranges from zero (0), indicating no stability, to positive one (+1), indicating complete reliability. The closer the obtained value is to positive one, the higher the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for the Interpersonal Communication Skills Questionnaire was 0.73, indicating good reliability. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.86 (Raeisi et al., 2019).

2.2.2. Organizational Commitment

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Allen and Meyer (1977), translated and compiled by Shekarkan and Sayahi (1996), measures three dimensions of commitment: affective, normative, and continuance. The modified version contains 24 questions on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The reliability of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was calculated in a preliminary study using Cronbach's alpha, with a reliability coefficient of 0.77 in the study by Hoveyda et al. (2011). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was 0.74 (Heidari et al., 2022).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Basic and Advanced Communication Skills Training Package

The training package includes fundamental, basic, and advanced interpersonal communication skills. Among the

sources used are the book "Dialectical Behavior Therapy Techniques" by Hassan Hamidpour, the book "Communication: Your Key to Success" by Shirley Taylor, translated by Nader Azad Safat, and the book "How to Talk to Anyone" by Leil Lowndes, translated by Mahdi Qaracheh Daqi, and others, which were approved by six members of the faculty of the Islamic Azad University, Khomeini Shahr (Davarzani, 2018; Raeisi et al., 2019).

The training sessions were conducted in a workshop format twice a week on Wednesdays and Thursdays in an equipped training room in the repair shop. Each session lasted one and a half hours, with a fifteen-minute break after 45 minutes. Educational tools such as slides, video projectors, and educational booklets were used.

Session 1: Introduction and Importance of Human Relations

In the first session, participants will be introduced to one another to foster cooperation and create a positive relationship. The session will focus on familiarizing the participants with the concepts and significance of human relations. An overview of basic and advanced interpersonal relationship concepts will be provided, emphasizing their importance in both personal and professional settings.

Session 2: Identifying Communication Barriers

The second session will be dedicated to categorizing communication barriers. Detailed explanations of these barriers and their inhibitory effects will be presented. Participants will be taught key communication concepts and skills, laying the groundwork for overcoming these obstacles and improving their interpersonal interactions.

Session 3: Expressing Needs and Assertive Listening

In this session, participants will learn to identify and express their needs effectively. The session will cover essential skills such as assertive listening, which involves listening attentively and respectfully. These foundational skills are crucial for establishing effective interpersonal relationships.

Session 4: Non-Verbal Communication

The fourth session will focus on non-verbal communication and its significance in interactions. Participants will learn how body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues influence communication. Emphasis will be placed on recognizing and

interpreting non-verbal signals to enhance understanding and connection with others.

Session 5: Drafting Assertiveness

Participants will draft their assertiveness scripts, integrating the components learned so far. This session will guide them in creating personalized assertiveness scripts as an advanced communication skill. The goal is to empower participants to communicate their needs and boundaries confidently and respectfully.

Session 6: The Power of Saying No

In the sixth session, participants will learn the advanced skill of saying no. The session will provide strategies for refusing requests assertively without damaging relationships. Participants will practice scenarios where they must assertively decline, helping them build confidence in this essential skill.

Session 7: Negotiating Conflict Resolution

This session will focus on negotiation techniques for resolving conflicts as an advanced interpersonal skill. Participants will learn methods for effective negotiation, aiming to reach mutually beneficial solutions. Role-playing exercises will help them practice these techniques in a supportive environment.

Session 8: Analyzing Interpersonal Problems

The final session will cover methods for analyzing interpersonal problems. Participants will engage in a question-and-answer segment, followed by role-playing exercises to practice the techniques learned. The session will conclude with a comprehensive review and discussion, allowing participants to consolidate their learning and address any remaining questions.

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using covariance analysis and SPSS.22 software.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic findings showed that 56.7% of the experimental group were men and 43.3% were women, while in the control group, 60% were men and 12% were women. The mean ages of the experimental and control groups were 32.70 (SD = 2.78) and 26.16 (SD = 2.35), respectively.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Interpersonal Relationships and Components of Organizational Commitment by Group

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	N
Pretest Interpersonal Relationships	Control	52.46	11.90	30
	Experimental	51.56	9.51	30
Posttest Interpersonal Relationships	Control	56.66	12.40	30
	Experimental	77.36	7.24	30
Pretest Organizational Commitment Components				
Affective Commitment	Control	33.01	5.39	30
	Experimental	31.96	2.67	30
	Total	32.48	4.25	60
Continuance Commitment	Control	37.96	8.19	30
	Experimental	39.90	13.75	30
Normative Commitment	Control	34.86	3.88	30
	Experimental	35.03	2.96	30
Total Commitment	Control	105.83	12.28	30
	Experimental	106.90	13.20	30
Posttest Organizational Commitment Components				
Affective Commitment	Control	30.03	3.92	30
	Experimental	39.16	3.98	30
Continuance Commitment	Control	38.13	13.03	30
	Experimental	42.13	4.45	30
Normative Commitment	Control	35.36	4.77	30
	Experimental	40.13	4.18	30
Total Commitment	Control	103.53	8.61	30
	Experimental	121.43	9.31	30

The mean scores and standard deviations for interpersonal relationships and the components of

organizational commitment are reported separately for the experimental and control groups.

Table 2

Results of Covariance Analysis for Interpersonal Relationships in Experimental and Control Groups, Controlling for Pretest Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Effect Size
Group	381.681	1	381.681	4.573	.037	.074
Error	4757.334	57	83.462			
Total	342663.000	60				

Table 2 shows the results of covariance analysis for interpersonal relationships in the experimental and control groups, controlling for pretest effects. According to these results, posttest interpersonal relationships with an F value of 4.573 at an alpha level smaller than 0.05 ($p < .05$) showed a significant difference between the groups. Additionally,

the effect size was calculated to be 0.074. The results indicate a significant difference in the posttest interpersonal relationships between the study groups, demonstrating that basic and advanced communication skills training significantly affects the quality of interpersonal relationships among employees.

Table 3

Results of Covariance Analysis for Organizational Commitment Components in Experimental and Control Groups, Controlling for Pretest Effects

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Affective Commitment	Group	1132.611	1	1132.611	77.015	.001
	Error	808.848	55	14.706		
	Total	73988.000	60			

Continuance Commitment	Group	.828	1	.828	.009	.923
	Error	4890.164	55	88.912		
	Total	79917.000	60			
Normative Commitment	Group	338.567	1	338.567	16.659	.001
	Error	1117.788	55	20.323		
	Total	87013.000	60			

Table 3 shows the results of covariance analysis for organizational commitment components in the experimental and control groups, controlling for pretest effects. The posttest affective commitment with an F value of 77.015 at an alpha level smaller than 0.05 ($p < .05$) showed a significant difference between the groups. The posttest normative commitment with an F value of 16.659 at an alpha level smaller than 0.05 ($p < .05$) also showed a significant difference between the groups. However, the posttest continuance commitment with an F value of 0.009 at an alpha level greater than 0.05 ($p > .05$) did not show a significant difference between the groups. Overall, the results of the covariance analysis showed a significant difference in the organizational commitment components between the study groups in the posttest stage, indicating that basic and advanced communication skills training significantly affects the organizational commitment (affective and normative commitment) of employees.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of basic and advanced communication skills training on the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment among employees of Kimiya Chlor Petrochemical in Shushtar. The results showed a significant difference in the posttest interpersonal relationships between the study groups, indicating that basic and advanced communication skills training significantly affects the quality of interpersonal relationships among employees. The findings are consistent with prior studies (Akosi, 2014; Bigdeli & Doroudi, 2021; Davarzani, 2018; Raeisi et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2011).

Considering the complex nature of the communication process and the necessity of developing interpersonal communication skills, employees should strive to improve their communication skills according to their professional needs. Since communication ability is the most critical factor in organizational decision-making and individual success at work, having communication and interpersonal skills is of great importance to employees; over 25% of interpersonal problems in organizations stem from communication issues at the individual and organizational levels. It should be noted

that when individuals do not communicate properly at work, they waste time, deplete resources, fail to achieve goals, and damage their relationships. Therefore, a skilled manager should focus on improving their relationships to have a better position among employees, minimize conflicts, influence opinions and behaviors, and control practical reactions in the workplace. Individuals who possess more communication skills in verbal, feedback, and listening areas are generally more successful in interpersonal communication in self-awareness, self-disclosure, awareness of others, accepting feedback, self-regulation, clarity, and dealing with emotions and differences (Turner et al., 2011). Hence, employees who establish better interpersonal communication with both superiors and subordinates can better understand the feelings of their colleagues, gain their trust, help others understand them better, speak more clearly, listen to others well, hear and address criticisms, and convey their concepts honestly. Therefore, training and improving communication skills at individual, interpersonal, and group levels can enhance influence and achievement of organizational goals.

Additionally, the results showed a significant difference in the posttest organizational commitment components between the study groups, indicating that basic and advanced communication skills training significantly affects organizational commitment (affective and normative commitment) among employees. The findings are consistent with prior studies (Davarzani, 2018; Geun & Park, 2019). Keyton (2011) defined communication in organizations as "a complex and continuous process through which organizational members create, maintain, and change the organization." According to this definition, communication and communication skills are associated with continuous organizational commitment in various ways. For instance, Allen (1992) found that communication skills account for up to 59% of the variance in organizational commitment, particularly in organizations engaged in total quality management (Allen, 1992). de Ridder (2004) highlighted the importance of task-related information for organizational commitment (de Ridder, 2004), while McDonald and Gandz (1991) suggested that commitment is especially important for human relations within the organization (McDonald &

Gandz, 1991). Information related to the organization can be communicated to all employees through various channels such as group meetings, team leaders, brochures, newsletters, managers, company websites, and mission statements (Supata, 2005). These methods can influence organizational commitment as employees feel a sense of ownership. Additionally, knowing more about internal procedures increases employees' attachment to their employers as they see themselves as integral members contributing to organizational goals. Some researchers traditionally divide the concepts or components related to organizational commitment into attitudinal and behavioral commitment (Soupatha, 2005). Attitudinal commitment reflects an individual's loyalty to the organization, emphasizing their identification and involvement with it. On the other hand, behavioral commitment reflects a process by which individuals associate themselves with an organization due to the costs of leaving it. Keyton (2011) defined communication in organizations as "a complex and continuous process through which organizational members create, maintain, and change the organization (Keyton, 2010)." Managers usually play a crucial role in this process as they need to provide a broader picture of the organization and its surrounding environment (Robson & Tourish, 2005). The centrality of managers in the process indicates a link between managerial communication and organizational attitudes, enabling subordinates to form attitudes and behaviors based on the information they receive from managers. Consequently, one outcome of such behavior is employees' commitment to the organization. Organizational communication, commitment, and job satisfaction are all variables that affect organizational performance, and poor communication skills within the organization reduce organizational commitment. The impact of organizational communication on commitment levels among employees has drawn the attention of some researchers (Goris et al., 2000). As Stuart (1999) argued, communication skills training can impact employee empowerment, which in turn affects organizational commitment (Stuart, 1999). Additionally, organizational commitment has three essential components: identification with organizational goals and values, participation in the organization through effort, and loyalty to the organization (Al-Meer, 1989). Therefore, efforts to communicate goals, values, policies, and customer handling with superiors and subordinates throughout the organization and to promote overall commitment levels among employees are crucial (Gould-Williams, 2003). Communication skills play a significant role in increasing

commitment levels through human resource management practices and ensuring the organization's vision and strategy. Consequently, enhancing ownership practices through increased employee involvement in decision-making processes and delegating some tasks and responsibilities to them impacts overall organizational commitment.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Due to the limited statistical population, caution is advised when generalizing to other populations. The lack of a follow-up stage to examine the long-term effects of communication skills training and the self-report nature of the instruments may have led to the recording of inaccurate results. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that organizational managers pay attention to communication skills training to enhance the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment. Managers can improve organizational commitment by improving employee relationships, increasing trust, fostering greater participation, raising awareness, planning to increase responsibility, and creating conditions for greater employee trust. Developing and enhancing communication skills within the organization can develop mutual relationships among employees, increase participation and social trust, and, consequently, organizational commitment, as increased communication skills and subsequent organizational commitment and interpersonal relationships accelerate service delivery to clients and improve organizational performance.

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Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally.

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