



Relationship between Communication Competence and Psychological Well-being of Flood Victims in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between psychological well being and communication competence among flood relief workers as perceived by disaster victim underlying the recent interest on communication studies and disaster management, discusses the current issues and offers a future research perspective. It offers to understand communication competence of relief workers in the areas of communication studies in Malaysian organizations and how does this concept relate to psychological well-being of flood victim. The cross-sectional data for this study were collected via a survey of 270 flood victims. The study highlights the important of flood relief workers' communication competence from different aspect as perceived by the flood victim. The result indicate that there is a relationship between both variables. In sum, this study provides theoretical contributions to communication competence research and the literature on communication studies. The paper draws attention to the current issues of the disaster management on communication studies and highlights it for future directions.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Communication Competence, Flood Victim

JEL Classifications: Q54

1. INTRODUCTION

Emergency management scholars have long recognized the roles of communication within disaster. Scholars in communication studies have long viewed disasters as particularly rich contexts within which to study communication processes. Despite this common interest, the two disciplines have had little do with each other in an integrated fashion. Emergency and crisis incidents are characterized by numerous factors that may delay effective response for managing vexing problems faced in such a situation.

First, during crisis emergency managers face situations that create uncertainty in roles and responsibilities. Second, emergency managers are struggling for time and are required to respond and react quickly due to the severity of the emergency situation. The devastating consequences of disasters and crises such as casualties,

damage to people and property, and so forth make it imperative to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters in the most effective and timely manner. Finally, emergency situations require fast and frugal decision making by emergency managers (Ryaff, 1989), which means that critical decisions are made under time pressure and uncertainty.

Floods in Malaysia have caused a change in the lives of those affected. These changes sometimes provide pressure to the flood victims in their daily life. The relationship between experienced events and stress affect the victims indirectly. Pressure can affect the flood victims' quality of life. Despite this, sustained pressure varies with individuals. According to Ralf and Ute (2001), although the flood disaster can be predicted and detected several days before the incident, it still gives shock and pressure to the flood victims, and this is considered as a perception of control (perceived controllability).

Flood not only affects the victims physically, but also from the security perspective as well as places of residence and family safety. These feelings, in turn, affect the quality of life and well-being enjoyed by flood victims in Malaysia. The quality of life degenerates if the victim is under pressure as a result of the incident. Different acceptance of these floods will cause different levels of the quality of life enjoyed.

Thus the purpose of this study is trying to combine both areas of communication competence and psychological well-being among flood victim in Malaysian contexts.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many reports, discuss management challenges, performance of response operations, and intergovernmental relations in the contexts of disaster management. Two frequently stated problems are interoperability and performance management. Problems in interoperability concern the need to create common languages, clarify expected outcomes, and lead by example. Performance measurement is an approach to defining outcomes and measuring progress toward achieving outcomes. Several reports discuss the need to establish national standards. Regardless of whether these standards exist or whether local entities formulate their own, performance is an essential management tool to guarantee objectives are being met. Thus, national-level plans exhibit and emphasize some important performance standards, abilities, skills, and competencies that are required for managing emergencies in a collaborative setting.

The theories have also allowed the researchers to examine the impacts of various types of flood experience toward the psychological well-being of the flood victims. The more life changes individuals experience, regardless of the positive or negative aspects of change events, the more likely their coping or resistance resources will be faced with anxiety and depression. The crucial quality of life events in this formulation is believed to be undesirable; such events threaten the physical survival or emotional well-being of the Malaysian flood victims.

Thus, the primary goal of this article is to address the concern related to communication competence among flood relief workers and psychological well-being of flood victim in Malaysia. This issue is particularly important and critical when considering such a volatile and sensitive field as emergency management in a state where aid is necessary to show their skills in dealing with various issues related to disaster victims.

Competence' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities (Gigerenzer and Todd, 1999). In the Malaysian context, culture plays a big role in communication. As a country which is comprised of three ethnic groups; the Malays (52%), Chinese (30%) and Indians (8%), perceptions of communication competence can be varied. However, Asma (1996) asserts that, "while we differ in many symbolic expressions, our common denominator lies in our deep-seated Asian values" (p. xiii)

(Abdullah, 1996). Looking at the communication style of one of these ethnic groups, the Malays, Lailawati (2006) contends that for the Malaysian Malays, their communication is partly shaped by the religion they embrace (Salleh, 2006).

3. REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Communication scholars have long grappled with the concept of communicative competence. In a seminal publication, Chomsky (1965) articulated two concepts on competence: Linguistic competence and performance. Linguistic competence refers to the native speaker's innate ability to produce grammatical sentences of a language, while linguistic performance refers to the actual use of language. His work is solely preoccupied with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community that knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (Clemens et al., 1999).

Throughout the literature, the uses and definition of the term "competency" are numerous, varied, and inconsistent. While competence refers to the capability to function in a given setting, competency refers to one's actual performance in a specific role in a given situation (Schroeder, 2008). According to Eraut (1994) "Competence... is given a generic or holistic meaning and refers to a person's overall capacity.

Initially, Spitzberg (1988) defined communication competence as "the ability to interact well with others" (p. 68). He explains, "the term 'well' refers to accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness" (p. 68). A much more complete operationalization is provided by Friedrich (1994) when he suggests that communication competence is best understood as "a situational ability to set realistic and appropriate goals and to maximize their achievement by using knowledge of self, other, context, and communication theory to generate adaptive communication performances."

This paper looks at communicative competence as a product of social experience, as it is highly dependent on the context in which the interaction takes place, and can have consequences on health risk behaviors among risky individuals, specifically children and adolescents. Communication, is a transaction that occurs between the conversant and interactant. We adopt the definition that communicative competence is the ability of an individual to demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate communicative behavior in a given situation such as disaster.

3.1. Psychological Well-being

Well-being is a multifaceted concept. It is often thought of as one of the hallmarks of the liberal arts experience, resulting from educational encounters that both guide students in the search for meaning and direction in life and help them realize their true potential. The Ryff is a straightforward and relatively short survey that assesses the psychological component of well-being. This review discusses the administration and cost of the Ryff; the

theoretical background, development, and psychometric properties of the instrument; and possible uses of this instrument in higher education assessment settings.

Well-being is a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social, and psychological dimensions as well as health-related behaviors. The Ryff scales of psychological well-being is a theoretically grounded instrument that specifically focuses on measuring multiple facets of psychological well-being. These facets include the following: Self-acceptance, the establishment of quality ties to other, a sense of autonomy in thought and action, the ability to manage complex environments to suit personal needs and values, the pursuit of meaningful goals and a sense of purpose in life and continued growth and development as a person (Table 1).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A useful framework for understanding communication competence was designed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) and is known as the component model of competence because it is comprised of three specific dimensions: Motivation (an individual's approach or avoidance orientation in various social situations), knowledge (plans of action; knowledge of how to act; procedural knowledge), and skill (behaviors actually performed).

The component model asserts that communication competence is mutually defined by the interdependency of the cognitive

component (concerned with knowledge and understanding), the behavioral component (concerned with behavioral skills), and the affective component (concerned with attitudes and feelings about the knowledge and behaviors) by interactants in an interpersonal encounter within a specific context. Rubin (1985) explains that communication competence is "an impression formed about the appropriateness of another's communicative behavior" and that "one goal of the communication scholar is to understand how impressions about communication competence are formed, and to determine how knowledge, skill and motivation lead to perceptions of competence within various contexts" (p. 173).

Communicative competence is dependent on the context in which the interaction takes place. Communication which is successful with one group in one situation, may not be perceived as competent with a different group in another situation. McCroskey (1982) attempts to clarify the importance of competence when he writes, "The domain of communicative competence includes learning what are the available means (available strategies), how they have been employed in various situations in the past, and being able to determine which ones have the highest probability of success in a given situation" (p. 5).

5. METHOD

The method employed was this study was quantitative design. The population for this research was flood victim at negeri

Table 1: Definitions of theory-guided dimensions of well-being

Self-acceptance	High scorer: Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life. Low scorer: Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred with past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is
Positive relations with others	High scorer: Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships Low scorer: Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others
Autonomy	High scorer: Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards Low scorer: Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways
Environmental mastery	High scorer: Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values. Low scorer: Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control over external world
Purpose in life	High scorer: Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living Low scorer: Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning
Personal growth	High scorer: Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness Low scorer: Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks sense of improvement or expansion over time; feels bored and uninterested with life; feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors

Source: Ryff and Keyes (1995. p. 1072)

Terengganu during the flood 2014. The sampling technique that has been used in this research was purposive sampling. This method required the researcher to select the sample that are known to possess a particular characteristics under investigation. Self-administered questionnaire was used as the research method. From the 300 set of questionnaires that are distributed by the researcher, only 270 set were returned. The questionnaire was classified into different parts. The first part of the questionnaire was about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part comprised the information about communication competence. Likert scale was used in the questionnaire for analysis.

Communication skills were measured using scales by Moreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2001) which measured communication competence based on three components which were motivation, knowledge and skills. Two items were dropped since it was not appropriate with the Malaysian community culture. The items were discussing safe sex with someone you are considering sexual relation with (interpersonal communication) and making an elaborate toast to a large, formal wedding party (public speaking). Likert type scoring (1-5) was employed for this instrument. High scores indicate high communications skills while low scores indicate low communications skills.

Psychological well-being was measured by Ryff scales of psychological well-being. The Ryff inventory consists of either 84 questions (long form) or 54 questions (medium form). There is also a short form, but it is statistically unreliable and therefore should not be used for assessment. Both the long and medium forms consist of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1-6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. The data were analyzed statistically and computed using the SPSS for Windows 20.0 statistical program.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of study presents the results and findings of the quantitative analysis. The first section of the study comprised the demographic information where data collected on the gender, age, income and education levels. The above information was analyzed using the descriptive statistics where mean (M) \pm standard deviation (SD), frequencies and percentage were calculated.

Majorities of the participants were male at 77.8% and female accounted for only 22.2% of the respondents. All the participants were aged below 40 years. Most of the respondents (57.8%) income were less than RM1000 and self-employed as shown in Table 2.

6.1. Perception toward Communication Competence: Motivation

The discussion in this section is performed based on three dimensions to measure the communication competencies, motivation, knowledge and skills. The mean \pm SD is used to

Table 2: Demographic data

Demography	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	210 (77.8)
	Female	60 (22.2)
Age	<20 years	19 (7.0)
	21-30 years	71 (26.3)
	31-40 years	85 (31.5)
	41-50 years	68 (25.2)
	>50 years	27 (10.0)
Income	<RM1000	156 (57.8)
	RM1001-RM2000	75 (27.8)
	RM2001-RM3000	34 (12.6)
	>RM3001	5 (1.9)
Occupation	Not working	99 (36.7)
	Government	53 (19.6)
	Non-government	56 (20.7)
	Self-employed	57 (21.1)
	Others	5 (1.9)

determine the item with the highest and lowest perception. Table 3 indicated that in term of motivation, the highest mean is for the items flood relief workers motivated to deliver easy and informative to the flood victims (4.54 ± 0.56). Next item in the rank is flood relief workers are motivated when giving a persuasive speech to the victims (4.15 ± 0.98). Flood relief workers are motivated when introducing the group leader to the flood victims (4.04 ± 1.01), whereas the lowest value is for the item flood relief workers are motivated to tell the flood victims not to interrupt and must wait for their turn to speak (2.53 ± 1.58), flood relief workers are motivated when debating what is right even he/she knows all the people in the group have different views (2.58 ± 1.42) and flood relief workers motivated to give a speech without preparation (2.6 ± 1.39).

The results of this study show that the employee is perceived as able and motivated to help the victims and have communication skills that are relatively high. Scores of low perceived to employee motivation in doing an impromptu speech, try to avoid open debate with the victims and also has low motivation in telling the victim not to interrupt when they were speaking. This finding is consistent with the culture of the Malay community who do not like to talk too direct and always emphasize on the value of courtesy even though in the disaster situation.

For knowledge dimension, the item that yielded high values is flood relief workers are knowledgeable when delivering the easy and informative information to the flood victims (4.54 ± 0.58), followed by flood relief workers are knowledgeable when giving a persuasive speech to the flood victims (4.16 ± 0.99), and flood relief workers are knowledgeable to tell the victims that they can not cross the line (4.04 ± 1.18) (Table 4). In turn, interpersonal communication skills in flood relief workers are knowledgeable to give a speech without preparation (2.70 ± 1.26); flood relief workers are knowledgeable to tell the victims that he was not enough ready for flood situation (2.83 ± 1.19) and flood relief workers are knowledgeable to make jokes spontaneously during serious discussions (3.16 ± 1.05).

The results for this dimension indicate the same phenomenon. Employees are perceived by the flood victims as more

Table 3: Mean±SD for items for communication competence: Motivation

Item	Mean±SD
Flood relief workers are motivated to deliver easy and informative information to the flood victims	4.54±0.56
Flood relief workers are motivated when giving a persuasive speech to the victims	4.15±0.98
Flood relief workers are motivated when introducing the group leader to the flood victims	4.04±1.01
Flood relief workers are motivated while giving technical report to the victims	3.99±1.22
Flood relief workers are motivated to refused the invitation for an activity with someone of different gender	3.97±1.17
Flood relief workers are motivated when asking someone of different gender to perform activities at the relief centers	3.88±1.17
Flood relief workers are motivated to tell the victims that they can not cross the line/boundary	3.79±1.28
Flood relief workers are motivated to tell the victims that he has made a mistake	3.71±1.03
Flood relief workers are motivated when he was a leader of the group	3.34±1.01
Flood relief workers were motivated when interviewed for a live television broadcast	3.21±1.39
Flood relief workers were motivated to raise up the topics that he feels are important	3.19±1.38
Flood relief workers are motivated to make spontaneously jokes during serious discussions	3.03±1.51
Flood relief workers are motivated to correct minor errors during discussion with flood victim	2.88±1.39
Flood relief are workers motivated to tell the victims that he is not ready for flood situation	2.81±1.43
Flood relief workers are motivated to give a speech without preparation	2.66±1.394
Flood relief workers are motivated when debating what is right even he/she knows all the people in the group have different views	2.58±1.424
Flood relief workers are motivated to tell the flood victims not to interrupt and must wait for their turn to speak	2.53±1.379

SD: Standard deviation

Table 4: Mean±SD for items for communication competence: Knowledge

Item	Mean±SD
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when delivering the easy and informative information to the flood victims	4.54±0.58
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when giving a persuasive speech to the flood victims	4.16±0.99
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to tell the victims that they can not cross the line	4.04±1.18
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to tell the victims that he had made a mistake	3.96±1.39
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when he was a leader of the group	3.96±1.26
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when giving technical report to the victims	3.93±1.21
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when introducing the leader to the flood victims	3.90±1.19
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to ask someone of different gender to perform activities at the relief centers	3.81±1.02
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable when interviewed for a live television broadcast	3.50±0.89
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to correct minor errors during group discussions	3.32±1.21
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to raise up the topics that he feels are important	3.21±1.22
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to make jokes spontaneously during serious discussions	3.06±1.55
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to tell the victims that he was not enough ready for flood situation	2.83±1.19
Flood relief workers are knowledgeable to give a speech without preparation	2.70±1.26

SD: Standard deviation

knowledgeable in conveying information, ability to persuade and inform about the regulations to the victims is high as well as persuasive. However, their knowledge is low in terms of humor, delivering an impromptu speech and did not admit that they are not prepared to face disaster situations.

As for skilled dimension, the item that yielded high values almost equal to other items in the other two dimensions, flood relief workers are skillful when delivering the easy and informative information to the flood victims (4.14 ± 0.58). Flood relief workers are skillful when giving a persuasive speech to the victims (4.16 ± 0.99), and flood relief workers are skillful to tell the flood victims that they cannot cross the line (4.04 ± 1.18). The lowest item was for flood relief workers are skillful to refused an invitation for an activity with someone of different gender (2.54 ± 1.11). Flood relief workers are skillful to tell the victims not to interrupt while his talking and must wait for their turn to speak (2.59 ± 1.24), and flood relief workers are skillful in debating what is right even he/she knows all members in the group have different views (2.65 ± 1.24) (Table 5).

The results of this study showed that workers have the skills that are perceived as high in terms of speech, persuade and inform

about the rules to disaster victims but have low skills in terms of the debate, refused an invitation and also impromptu speech.

7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTION TOWARD COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

To test the relationship between psychological well-being of flood victim and perception toward communication competence of flood relief worker, a Pearson correlation was conducted. Perception toward well-being is found to be negatively correlated with communication competence ($r = -0.33$, $P < 0.00$). As for the dimension of well-being, results indicate that there is also significant yet negative relationship between communication competence and self-acceptance ($r = -0.23$, $P < 0.00$), positive relationship ($r = -0.15$, $P < 0.00$), and autonomy ($r = -0.41$, $P < 0.00$). A negative correlation coefficient means that, for any two variables X and Y, an increase in X is associated with a decrease in Y. Thus, the lower psychological well-being experience by the victims, the more they perceived communication practice by the flood relief workers. These findings are consistent with the view that that aspect of communication competence is important

Table 5: Mean±SD for items for communication competence: Skills

Item	Mean±SD
Flood relief workers are skillfull when delivering the easy and informative information to the flood victims	4.54±0.58
Flood relief workers are skillfullwhen giving a persuasive speech to the victims	4.16±0.99
Flood relief workers are skillfull to tell the flood victims that they cannot cross the line	4.04±1.18
Flood relief workers are skillfull to tell the victims that he had made a mistake	3.96±1.39
Flood relief workers are skillfull when he was a leader of the group	3.96±1.26
Flood relief workers are skillfull while giving technical report to the flood victims	3.93±1.21
Flood relief workers are skillfull when introducing the leader to the flood victims	3.90±1.19
Flood relief workers are skillfull when asking someone of different gender to perform activities at the relief centers	3.81±1.022
Flood relief workers are skillfull when interviewed for a live television broadcast	3.50±0.895
Flood relief workers are skillfull to correct minor errors during group discussions	3.32±1.218
Flood relief workers are skillfull to raise up the topics that he feels are important	3.21±1.221
Flood relief workers are skillfull to make spontaneously jokes during serious discussions being run	3.06±1.557
Flood relief workers are skillfull to tell the victims that he was not enough ready for flood situation	2.83±1.196
Flood relief workers are skillfull to give a speech without preparation	2.70±1.263
Flood relief workers are skillfull in debating what is right even he/she knows all members in the group have different views	2.65±1.246
Flood relief workers are skillfull to tell the victims not to interrupt while his talking and must wait for their turn to speak	2.59±1.246
Flood relief workers are skillfull to refused an invitation for an activity with someone of different gender	2.54±1.113

SD: Standard deviation

in helping the flood victims. Communication competence in the form of the knowledge, skill and motivation can help boost the well-being of the flood victims.

There is no significant relationship found between perception toward communication competence and environmental mastery ($r = -0.09$, $P > 0.00$), and purpose in life ($r = -0.00$, $P > 0.00$).

8. SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As the number of connected organizations are forced to cope with disaster issues, it is important to understand the challenges of their communication with each other so communication can be facilitated. Communication should be examined not just for its role in preventing, responding to, and recovering from disaster. Researchers should also study communication for its role in creating or being a source of disaster.

One limitation of the Ryff scales is that it relies on self-reported assessments of psychological well-being. As with all self-report instruments, students may respond in ways that are socially desirable rather than reveal their actual response to each statement. Ryff suggests that in order to obtain a more complete understanding of a respondent's psychological well-being, observational or survey data from others who are close to or important to the respondent is needed. A final limitation is that the validity of the instrument has been tested not on traditional-aged college students, but on adults age 25 or older.

Finally, we would recommend that more disaster-related studies privilege multiple voices, beyond those of researchers and disaster managers. Qualitative techniques, such as longterm observation, or ethnography, interviewing, focus groups, and document and artifact analysis provide valuable means of data collection and capture subjects' own words, perceptions, and experiences. Disasters especially effect individuals and communities in unique ways and it is critical for research subjects to express their experience from their perspective. Communication Studies has benefited greatly in recent years by including qualitative

research in its repertoire of methodological approaches and would recommend that communication scholars consider doing likewise.

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