

EFFECT OF COMMUNICATION STYLES OF FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES STUDENTS ON THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT: In this study, it is aimed that the communication styles of the 1st and 4th grade students at the faculty of health sciences reach their academic achievement. A total of 977 students attending the 1st (438) and 4th (539) year classes were enrolled in this research. The data were collected using the sociodemographic characteristics form and the Interpersonal Communication Styles Scale (ICSS) and were evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics. Among participating students, 44.8% were in the 1st year and 55.2% were in the 4th year. The overall ICSS scores and open communication score averages of the 1st year students were found to significantly higher than those of the 4th year students. The open communication scores of students with a grade point average of 3.00–4.00 were higher than those with a low grade point average. In this study, it was concluded that most of the 1st year students of the faculty of health sciences use open and respectful (nurturing) communication styles, and that their use of open and respectful communication styles positively affects their academic achievement. The ability of the students to progress towards the fourth grade was not a determining factor in their use of open communication style.

Key Words: Academic Achievement, Interpersonal Communication, Learning Experience, Style of Communication.

Article Type: Research

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SAĞLIK BİLİMLERİ FAKÜLTESİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İLETİŞİM TARZLARININ AKADEMİK BAŞARILARINA ETKİSİ

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ÖZ: Bu çalışmada sağlık bilimleri fakültesinde okuyan 1. ve 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin iletişim tarzlarının akademik başarılarına etkisinin araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmaya 1. (438) ve 4. (539) sınıflara devam eden toplam 977 öğrenci katılmıştır. Veriler sosyodemografik özellikler formu ve Kişilerarası İletişim Tarzları Ölçeği (KİTÖ) ile toplanmış olup tanımlayıcı ve çıkarımsal istatistikler kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin %44.8'i 1. sınıfta, %55.2'si 4. sınıftadır. Birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin genel KİTÖ puanları ve açık iletişim puan ortalamaları 4. sınıf öğrencilerine göre anlamlı derecede yüksek bulunmuştur. Genel not ortalaması 3.00-4.00 arasında olan öğrencilerin açık iletişim puanları, düşük not ortalamasına sahip öğrencilere göre daha yüksektir. Bu çalışmada sağlık bilimleri fakültesi 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin çoğunun açık ve saygılı (besleyici) iletişim biçimlerini kullandıkları, ayrıca açık ve saygılı iletişim biçimlerini kullanmalarının akademik başarılarını olumlu yönde etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Öğrencilerin dördüncü sınıfa kadar ilerleyebilmeleri açık iletişim tarzını kullanmalarında belirleyici olmamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik Başarı, İletişim Tarzı, Kişilerarası İletişim, Öğrenme Deneyimi.

Makale Türü: Araştırma

Jel Sınıflandırması: I10, I11

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are many communication definitions. Communication is a whole consisting of verbal and non-verbal messages and a mutual message exchange. Elements in a communication relation are sender, message and receiver. Communication is a process that ensures individuals to understand and express their emotions and others' emotions, strengthens social skills, and contributes to social development (Onay et al., 2011).

Communication skills enable an individual to gather information about a situation they encounter and develop perspective (Özer, 2006). The ability of the individual to communicate openly is important for their success (Bahadır, 2009). Happy individuals use an open communication style (Yalçın, 2019). The open communication style is an interaction that allows the individual to understand others and contributes to making them feel better (Lyubomirsky et al., 2009). Those who use open and respectful communication styles (nurturing) are successful in their social and professional life, while those who use self-centered and condescending communication styles (crippling) experience the opposite situation (Yeşilyaprak, 2005). Individuals are happier and more successful when they use the open communication style (Reynolds ve Scott, 2000; Mete ve Gercek, 2005; Wilkinson et al., 2008). In the field of health, the open communication style is very important in the treatment of diseases (Çetin et al., 2016).

Individual's communication style and his/her success in interaction are very important for coping with stress. People successful at communication succeed in stress management and they have good mental health (Brown, 2021). Self-realised individuals also have healthy communication skill. At schools, integration of regulations aiming at enhancing students' communication skill during their education lives is effective in stress management and increasing success. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to explore the relation between communication styles of freshmen and final year students and their academic achievement, and to emphasise the impact of their education and training lives on this matter.

1.1. Purpose of the study

In the current study, due to the importance of communication skills, it was aimed to investigate the effects of communication styles on the academic achievement of 1st and 4th year students studying at the faculty of health sciences.

1.2. Study Questions

1. What are the most preferred communication styles of the 1st and 4th year students of the faculty of health sciences?
2. Do students' preferred communication styles affect their academic achievement?

2. METHODS

2.1. Type of the Study

The study was conducted with descriptive and correlation design.

2.2. Population and Sample of the Study

This research was conducted with students studying at the faculty of health sciences (Departments of Nutrition and Dietetics, Child Development, Health Management, Social Work and Nursing) of a university in Ankara in the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year. No sample selection was made in the study, all students over the age of 18 who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study were included in the study. A total of 977 students receiving education in the first (438) and the fourth grades of each department participated in this study.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The research data were collected with the "Student Information Form" and the preferred communication styles of the students with "Interpersonal Communication Styles Scale" (ICSS).

Sociodemographic data form, one of the data collection tools, includes some socio-demographic characteristics of students (age, gender, class, general point average, etc.) and is prepared by researchers scanning the literature.

The ICSS, consisting of 31 items, includes they uses communication styles of the students. Each item is evaluated using a Likert type scale varying from 0 to 3. Score interval is 0-93. The Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained from the whole scale is $\alpha = 0.79$. The scale, which was organized by Şahin et al., (1994) specifically for our culture, consists of four subscales; open ($\alpha = 0.73$), respectful ($\alpha = 0.70$), self-centered ($\alpha = 0.56$) and contemptuous ($\alpha = 0.78$). Subscales that measure open and respectful communication styles are also referred to as "nurturing style" and subscales that measure self-centered and condescending communication style are also referred to as crippling by (Şahin et al., 1994). The high total score of the individual indicates that he is successful in interpersonal communication. The study was carried out by the researchers at the beginning of the lesson by taking the permission of the teaching staff of each department, by giving the measurement tools to the students separately.

2.4. Data Collection

Data was collected by disseminating questionnaire to students personally by researchers. In the classroom environment, the forms were distributed with the permission of the instructor of each course, and they were collected back after about 10-15 minutes.

2.5. Data Assessment

SPSS 21.0 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) programme was used in data analysis. Significance level in statistical analyses was taken as <0.05 . Data was expressed according to frequency and percentage distribution, average and standard deviation; and independent t test, chi square test, one-way analysis of variance, MANCOVA, Pearson's correlation analysis was used.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical committee permission dated 08.04.2019 and numbered 09/160 was received from council of ethics of a university for conducting this research. Institution permissions were received from the concerning university. Written consents were obtained from students who agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. It was stated to the students that their information would be kept confidential. The authors also adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

3. RESULTS

In Table 1, it can be seen that average age of the students enrolled in the study were 21.27 ± 2.64 . Female students comprised 86.7% of the study population and men comprised 13.3%. Of the students, 44.8% were in the 1st year and 55.2% were in the 4th. The open education (16.20 ± 3.70) and respectful communication (16.12 ± 3.46) average scores of those students whose father had an education level of high school or above was higher than those whose father had an education level of primary school or below, and the difference between them was statistically significant ($p = 0.003$, $p = 0.001$). The mean score of the students who lived with their family was higher than the mean score (0.75 ± 4.34) of those who lived with friends or in dormitories (5.13 ± 3.83), and the difference between them was statistically significant ($p = 0.017$).

The general point average of the students was 3.11 (3.11±0.35). The education level of the parents of the majority of the students participating in the survey was primary school or below (89.8%, 78.2%). More than half of the students lived with their friends or in a dormitory environment (56.3%).

Table 1. Descriptive Information about Students (N: 977)

Descriptive Information	n	%
Age (year)		
19 and below	217	22.2
20 and above	760	77.8
Gender		
Female	847	86.7
Male	130	13.3
Grade		
1	438	44.8
4	539	55.2
GPA		
0.00-2.99	316	32.3
3.00-4.00	661	67.7
Mother's education		
Primary education and below	877	89.8
High school and above	100	10.2
Father's education		
Primary education and below	764	78.2
High school and above	213	21.8
Cohabitation		
Family, siblings	427	43.7
Friends/dormitory	550	56.3
Income Status		
Good	146	14.9
Average	767	78.5
Poor	64	6.6
Residence		
Village/Town, District	294	30.1
Province	683	69.9
Family Type		
Nuclear/fragmented family	884	90.5
Extended family	93	9.5
Communication Skills Training		
Status		
Yes	505	51.7
No	472	48.3
Type of Training Received		
Lesson	427	84.6
Seminar, Course	78	15.4
Training Hour		
20 hours and below	341	55.1
21 hours and above	164	44.9

In Table 2, some characteristics of the students according to the Interpersonal Communication Styles Scale (ICSS) score averages are compared. The total score determined by the scale was higher in students aged 19 years or below (43.51 ± 7.19) than in those aged 20 years or above (40.25 ± 8.75). In terms of using respectful communication, a statistically significant difference was found between students aged 19 years or below and the other age groups. Classroom students used a more respectful communication style ($p=0.002$). Male students further adopted a self-centered (5.53 ± 2.37) and humiliating (8.09 ± 5.45) communication style. All of the differences, identified according to gender, were also statistically significant ($p=0.021$, $p=0.001$, $p=0.001$).

The average total ICSS, and open and respectful communication scores of students living in smaller settlement areas, such as a village, town, or district, were statistically significant and higher than the average of those living in provinces ($p=0.041$, $p=0.001$, $p=0.001$).

It was found that students who received communication skills training preferred the open communication and respectful styles, and this difference was statistically significant when compared to those who did not received such training ($p=0.001$, $p=0.001$). The type of communication skills training was not influential in determining the communication style of students.

The average total ICSS (42.56 ± 8.15) and open communication scores (16.17 ± 3.91) of students in the 1st year were higher than those in the 4th year (39.67 ± 8.63), but they were not statistically significant. However, the average respectful communication score (16.60 ± 3.52) of students in the 1st year was higher than that in the 4th year (14.47 ± 4.06), and the difference between them was statistically significant ($p=0.001$).

According to the general point average (GPA), the average total ICSS score (41.26 ± 8.09) of students with a GPA of 3.00–4.00 was higher than that of those (40.31 ± 9.39) with a GPA of 0.00–2.99. Those students with a GPA of 3.00–4.00 mostly preferred the open communication style (15.61 ± 3.98), while those with a GPA of 0.00–2.99 preferred the humiliating communication style (5.83 ± 4.33). Both differences were also statistically significant ($p=0.046$, $p=0.013$).

Table 2. Comparison of Some Characteristics of Students According to Their ICSS Score Average (N:977).

Some Characteristics of Students	Preferred Communication Style				Total ICSS m±ss
	Open Communication m±ss	Respectful Communication m±ss	Self-Centred Communication m±ss	Humiliating Communication m±ss	
Age					
19 and below	16.53±3.81	17.19±3.34	4.80±2.06	4.96±3.97	43.51±7.19
20 and above	15.08±4.18	14.92±3.99	4.68±2.06	5.55±4.10	40.25±8.75
	*p:0.091	p:0.002	p:0.939	p:0.696	p:0.010
Gender					
Female	15.48±4.12	15.50±3.98	4.58±1.98	5.00±3.65	40.55±8.13
Male	14.91±4.26	14.96±3.91	5.53±2.37	8.09±5.45	43.58±10.46
	p:0.664	p:0.961	p:0.021	p:0.001	p:0.001
Grade					
1 st Grade	16.17±3.91	16.60±3.52	4.66±2.10	5.06±4.15	42.56±8.15
4 th Grade	14.78±4.22	14.47±4.06	4.73±2.03	5.70±3.99	39.67±8.63
	p:0.077	p:0.001	p:0.264	p:0.762	p:0.312
GNO					

0.00-2.99	14.98±4.43	14.84±4.14	4.68±2.18	5.83±4.33	40.31±9.39
3.00-4.00	15.61±3.98	15.71±3.86	4.71±2.00	5.22±3.94	41.26±8.09
	p:0.046	p:0.080	p:0.558	p:0.013	p:0.008
Mother's Education					
Primary edu and ↓	15.41±4.13	15.37±3.98	4.67±2.04	5.38±4.02	40.81±8.33
High school and ↑	15.39±4.26	15.93±3.91	5.02±2.19	5.77±4.55	42.23±10.07
	p:0.916	p:0.450	p:0.338	p:0.629	p:0.375
Father's Education					
Primary edu. and ↓	15.18±4.23	15.23±4.08	4.66±2.06	5.40±4.03	40.48±8.48
High school and ↑	16.20±3.70	16.12±3.46	4.83±2.06	5.46±4.23	42.66±8.52
	p:0.003	p:0.001	p:0.954	p:0.792	p:0.887
Cohabitants					
Family/sibling	15.61±4.24	15.53±3.88	4.90±2.19	5.78±4.34	41.86±8.78
Friend/dormitory	15.25±4.06	15.35±4.04	4.54±1.94	5.13±3.83	40.25±8.27
	p:0.315	p:0.248	p:0.087	p:0.017	p:0.250
Residence					
Village/town/district	16.30±3.55	16.30±3.41	4.52±2.04	5.33±4.12	42.26±7.74
Province	15.14±4.34	15.05±4.13	4.78±2.07	5.46±4.06	40.41±8.80
	p:0.001	p:0.001	p:0.423	p:0.538	p:0.041
Family Type					
Nuclear/fragmented	15.40±4.13	15.39±3.99	4.71±2.06	5.40±4.08	40.94±8.57
Extended	15.40±4.23	15.79±3.77	4.58±2.09	5.56±4.02	41.14±8.16
	p:0.543	p:0.592	p:0.637	p:0.972	p:0.772
Communication Training					
Yes	15.98±3.71	16.13±3.61	4.65±1.99	5.11±3.90	41.87±7.84
No	14.79±4.48	14.67±4.20	4.76±2.13	5.74±4.23	39.97±9.13
	p:0.001	p:0.001	p:0.926	p:0.094	p:0.001
Type of Received Training					
Lesson	16.05±3.81	16.08±3.70	4.76±2.00	4.85±3.90	41.77±7.94
Seminar, Cours	16.36±3.63	16.73±3.50	4.65±2.10	5.40±4.25	43.06±8.30
	p:0.848	p:0.471	p:0.752	p:0.559	p:0.807

*p:0.05

4. Discussion

In this study, the average total ICSS and respectful communication scores were higher in students aged 19 years or below, which may have been related to them having healthy family communication during that period (Korap, 2013). According to the findings of the study, male students adopted the self-centered and condescending communication style more than the females did. This can be attributed to them not feeling well and the low level of intrinsic motivation for male students to study. Dalkılıç (2006) found that male adolescents with unsuccessful perceptions preferred the self-centered communication approach (Dalkılıç, 2006). In the current study, a statistically significant difference was found with respect to respectful communication in favor of 1st year students, which can be explained by the fact that 1st year students communicated more frequently with family members and felt valuable because they had just left their families (Nazlı, 2014). Although the learning experiences of the 4th year students had a positive effect on their communication skills, their respectful communication scores may have decreased due to them having interacted more with family friendship groups. The increase in the average ICSS

scores and open and respectful communication scores of the students who received communication education can be attributed to the effect of such learning experiences.

In studies with nursing students, it was emphasized that as the learning experiences increased, the feeling of well-being and positive interaction also increased (Cevahir et al., 2008; Özyazıcıoğlu et al., 2009). Providing communication skills training for students positively affects their empathic communication (Arifoğlu and Gülcem, 2011). In the current study, a significant difference was found between students with a high academic achievement average and the open communication style and those with a low academic achievement average and the condescending communication style. Significant relationships were found between the open communication styles of an individual and their academic achievements (Erkuş and Günlü, 2009).

In this study, the fact that the open and respectful communication scores of students whose father had an education level of high school or above were significantly higher than those whose father had an education level of primary school or below can be explained by the behavior of the fathers with a higher education level. According to the increased education levels of their fathers, their communication skills differed positively (Dalkılıç, 2006; Cevahir et al., 2008; Özyazıcıoğlu et al., 2009; Erkuş and Günlü, 2009; Arifoğlu and Gülcem, 2011; Nazlı, 2014; Bernier et al., 2014). If interactions between the family and adolescents were healthy, the individual felt better and communicated that they understood others (Koç Erdamar, 2015; Soylu and Kağnıcı, 2015). The attitudes of the families that understood their children were influential with regards to the students developing and expressing clear and respectful communication styles (Brassart and Schelstraete, 2015).

Using the open communication style in the nursing profession is also important for understanding patients (Tutuk et al., 2002; Yarış and Dikici, 2008; Boscart, 2009; Collins, 2009; Kumcağız et al., 2011). In this study, the students living in small settlements had significantly higher total mean ICSS and open and respectful communication scores when compared to those living in a province, which can be attributed to the fact that they established sincere interactions with their families due to living in a small place, which made their parents more protective of them. The positive and negative attitudes of the families, depending on where they lived, affected the social skills of their children (Temel and Türkoğlu, 2019).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, it was observed that the 1st year students preferred communication styles such as open and respectful communication. It was concluded that the increase in their academic success was not affected by their communication style alone, as other factors, such as the education level of their father, living in small settlements, communication skills training, and seminars, also affected the communication style of the student. The use of open and respectful communication (nurturing) styles by the students positively affected their academic success.

Due to the importance of the open communication style in feeling good, it can be suggested that increased courses, seminars, and in-service programs should be provided for students so as to help them develop interpersonal relations during their learning experiences at university. In addition, new studies should be implemented to improve the open communication styles and empathic skills of university students.

Study limitations

This research is limited to the students studying at the Faculty of Health Sciences of a university in Ankara in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

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