

**HARMONIOUS INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
AMONG FACULTY**

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Abstract

The role of faculty in Engineering colleges is increasing day by day. Faculty are required to teach more effectively and efficiently so that students gain knowledge and become productive. The end goal of all teaching is to ensure that students gain information, explore the world outside, become independent learners, and acquire the requisite employability skills. In this process, faculty strive relentlessly to ensure that the best standards are maintained in the teaching-learning process. However, one often ignored element is the extent to which faculty must have interpersonal rapport among themselves in terms of collaboration, cooperation, empathy, and effective conflict resolution skills. These skills are of paramount importance in any institution. Faculty as role models should work in harmony and display dignity, respect, and empathy with one another. However brilliant a faculty may be individually, synergy among faculty will immensely benefit not only the faculty themselves but also their respective departments, students, and finally, the organisation itself. Since each faculty has a repertoire of varied skills and knowledge of how to teach optimally, working as a team, sharing information, communicating in an environment of non-manipulation will go a long way in strengthening the interpersonal networks of the faculty. In this paper, it will be argued that faculty need to possess excellent interpersonal skills so that there is an element of trust, understanding, empathy, and benevolence.

Keywords: Communication competence, effectiveness, appropriateness, respect, non-manipulation, open mindedness, empathy.

Introduction: Interpersonal skills among faculty play a crucial role in organisations. When faculty communicate with one another in a spirit of ambience, tolerance, and empathy, collaborative work is possible. Faculty of an organisation ultimately work for the well-being of the organisation. What does well-being mean? Well-being refers to work satisfaction, belongingness to the organisation, and enhancing organisational productivity. For an organisation to be stronger and prosper, faculty must cooperate with one another.

Importance of interpersonal communication: Interpersonal communication is the sine quo non of our social lives. We need to talk with people around us, exchange information for various purposes, empathize with others, and ensure that human relations prosper. What is the purpose of our very lives? It is to achieve what we set forth to achieve and then share our knowledge and views with others. However, human beings are highly fallible beings. They are prone to anger, despondency, jealousy, hatred, and suspicion. When these elements dominate an individual,

mayhem takes place in human relations. More than knowledge and wealth that human beings may acquire in their life time, it is the essence of good human relations that assume prime importance any time. Employees who are knowledgeable and arrogant will be avoided by others. Employees who are knowledgeable but highly introverted also will cause confusion in organisations. On the other hand, lack of knowledge accompanied by contumely behaviour is even more dangerous to interpersonal relations. Truly competent individuals have a combination of knowledge, humility, and empathy. Such individuals are liked by most people. These are essential qualities one must invariably possess in life.

In organisations, work exists in various forms. Broadly speaking, there are three levels here:

1. Work that faculty themselves have to carry out.
2. Work that is assigned to faculty at the departmental level.
3. Work assigned to faculty at the college level.

Preparing lesson plans, course plans, worksheets, maintaining registers are tasks faculty have to accomplish successfully at the individual level. On the other hand, faculty are given various departmental level responsibilities. Some of them would include maintaining departmental level information like log registers, producing common work sheets for students. They also need to represent the department on various fronts. At the end of the continuum, there is work related to NBA, NAAC, UGC, and other highly task-oriented functions. Faculty need to understand one another, work amiably, and respect each others' views. They need to disagree politely, and manage to tide over differences smoothly. They basically cannot ignore the fact that every kind of work in an organisation needs cooperation and collaboration. No work in organisations can be done in isolation. It is important to talk with others, discuss issues, understand difficulties, and find optimal solutions because work needs to be executed.

Smooth interactions: Employees in organisations must have smooth interactions. These interactions must be characterised by respect and tolerance. How can respect and tolerance be generated? They can be generated only if interactants believe in the concept of 'sharedness'. Sharedness exists when interactants believe in mutual give and take. Only when we respect and consider other's views, others too will reciprocate the same. We cannot expect others to respect our views if do not respect their views. Respect and tolerance form the core elements of interpersonal communication at the workplace. Interactions become rugged and distorted if participants do not respect each others' views. So, smooth interactions necessitate tolerance and respect.

Perspective-taking ability: A very important element in all our interpersonal interactions is the need to develop perspective-taking ability. We need to understand why others are speaking the way they are speaking. Empathy or perspective taking is a critical interpersonal skill that is most pivotal for faculty in organisations. Faculty should not be sitting on a high pedestal and judge others from their own vantage points in life. Different individuals will have different problems, and hence the need to develop perspective-taking ability. Perspective-taking ability essentially involves the element of being non-judgemental. We should not be judgemental towards others. Sadly in today's life, we are quick, rash, and come to sudden conclusions about others. We want to judge others. We think people are who they are because of their recklessness and laziness. How many times have we judged ourselves correctly? We rarely judge ourselves. Perspective-taking ability involves compassion and kindness. When we show kindness, we are essentially treating others as if they are our own. Do we judge our own family members? We do everything possible to understand and protect their self-respect and dignity. Then, why do we lack this perspective-taking ability when it comes to colleagues at the workplace? The need to show

empathy is a very critical interpersonal skill. When other interactants come to a conclusion that we are empathetic, they too will reciprocate. This way, a lot of misunderstandings can be resolved at the departmental level or at the organisational level.

Flexibility: If there is one critical element in life that helps us to understand ourselves and others better, then it is the element of adaptability or flexibility. Flexibility involves the desire to listen to others patiently. It requires motivation to suspend our judgement and come down one step and adjust with others. In life, adjustment is the most critical skill. With age and experience, we need to be more flexible and willing to change for the better. However, flexibility does not mean being slavish. It does not mean compromising without any self-respect. Flexibility means we consider others' view points, see the merit in their views, take the best from them, and incorporate them in our presentation or thinking. Flexibility is a sign of maturity. It is a sign of benevolence. It requires courage to listen to others' views patiently and with concern. Flexibility, thus, helps faculty to adjust where needed because the goals of the organisations are greater than our own interests and agendas.

Cognizance of others: Being cognizant of ourselves and others is a very important element in effective interpersonal communication. Cognizance means being aware of others, being aware of the other person's age, gender, likes, and dislikes, and moulding ourselves accordingly. Our verbal behaviour should take into consideration the other person's interests, likes and dislikes, and preferences. This is a sign of the spirit of accommodation. This is a critical skill we need to cultivate as faculty in organisations.

Altruism: This is the antithesis of selfishness or being self-centred. It is human nature to be concerned about our interests and goals. However, too much selfishness can seriously jeopardize interpersonal relations. In fact, selfishness destroys interpersonal relations and engenders suspicion. That is the reason why altruism should be cultivated in all of us at the workplace. Altruism involves being helpful to others around. Life in organisations is no exception. People need people. We must be helpful and guide others when they need our advice and help. Otherwise, life becomes miserable in organisations. When we can be of help to our colleagues and ease their burden, trust and respect increase. Helpful people ease others' burden.

Supportive climate: A supportive climate goes a long way in strengthening ourselves, others, and the organisations. Faculty who are supportive of others do not indulge in blame and accusations. Supportive people are empathetic, non-judgemental, and are ready to help others in their crises. A supportive climate creates a feeling of moral strength, a feeling of belongingness to the other organisation. Supportive climate creates mutual trust and rapport among colleagues in the department. Hence, it is beneficial to have a supportive climate in the department.

Mindful conversations: Faculty need to have mindful conversations with their colleagues. They should be mindful of what they say or do. Our words have an impact on others. They can discourage or make others hostile. Arguing, blaming, manipulating are all negative communication behaviours that destroy the peaceful ambience in departments. We should be mindful of our words, choice of language, and the judgements we make of others. Statements made in an impulsive tone can cause a lot of hurt and damage to other faculty. Sadly, it is pervasive in many organisations. Some faculty speak in an impulsive, impetuous, and contemptuous tone with others. Psychologically, they want to get rid of their pent up emotions. However, in trying to get rid of our pent up feelings, we have no right to speak in a rash and judgemental

tone. So, when we speak to others, we must be careful of the choice of words and not make rash and baseless statements.

Self-esteem: Competent faculty have adequate self-esteem. Faculty with good amount of self-esteem do not belittle others. They protect other's 'face'. They are aware of the fact that the other person needs to be shown due consideration and respect. Even if the other person makes a mistake, a faculty with good self-esteem understands the need to empathize and gently and respectfully guides him/her in the right direction. The ability to treat others with kindness and respect comes only when faculty have self-esteem. When faculty do not value themselves, when they do not treat themselves with respect, there will be only chaos, screaming, and disrespectful environment in the department. Hence, self-esteem is a very crucial element in interpersonal relations. People with self-esteem respect the fact that others too have self-esteem and it needs to be taken into account. When faculty realize that their colleagues are treating them with respect for their self-esteem, they too will reciprocate sooner or later or at least realise and begin to inculcate this element of interpersonal communication.

Composure: Being composed and calm is another element in the domain of interpersonal skills. Competent faculty maintain composure and are relaxed. They are not neurotic and get upset and anxious for everything. They treat issues, problems, and people with a relaxed and calm attitude. A calm attitude deescalates a hostile environment. When we are relaxed, we can resolve even the most complex issues. When we are tensed and anxious, we make quick judgements and make irresponsible statements. Faculty with the element of composure make others feel relaxed. This way, many problems can be amicably resolved among colleagues. People with the element of composure believe that human beings are fallible, but they could be rectified with equanimity.

Conclusions and recommendations: Harmonious interpersonal communication is the fulcrum on which interpersonal relations revolve. Being mindful, flexible, composed, and altruistic are critical interpersonal skills that faculty need to possess for organisations to prosper. Life in organisations is not about educational qualifications or how intelligent and knowledgeable we are. It is about to what extent harmony, respect, tolerance, and empathy prevail among colleagues at the departmental level. It should be clearly noted that institutions are greater than an individual or individuals. Faculty have a sanctimonious duty to ensure that a harmonious interpersonal climate prevails at the departmental level and also at the organisational level.

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