

LESSON-34

INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

“The person who sows a single beautiful thought in the mind of another, renders the world a greater service than that rendered by all the faultfinders combined. “

The word, interpersonal, means between two persons. Have you ever thought what takes place when two persons talk with each other? There are many factors, which influence the communication between persons. These varied factors may include differences in background, emotion, perception and motivation of those sharing communication. Communication between two individuals consists of a two-way flow of

- (a) informational contents concerned individuals are supposed to discuss,
- (b) Their feelings about that information
- (c) each person’s concepts, perceptions and feelings about himself and the other person and
- (d) the contexts in which the conversation is taking place.

Interpersonal Relationships

The interpersonal relationships can be viewed in different perspectives in order to have a better understanding about how these relationships contribute towards making the communication effective.

(a) The Interpersonal Needs Perspective

You must have heard a common saying, “Different strokes for different folks” in your day-to-day life. This implies that every person has interpersonal needs and his communication with the others shall, to a great extent, be driven by his needs. These needs differ from moment to moment and from movement to movement i.e. from time to time and person to person. Therefore, in other words, we can recognize communication as people’s attempts to satisfy their needs.

There are three basic interpersonal needs which constitute the driving force behind all interpersonal behaviour. These needs are:

- . *For inclusion,*
- . *For control, and*
- . *For affection*

The need *for inclusion* refers to the need of a person to associate him with others, to be a member, to be accepted, and to accept others as well. Inclusion needs vary for different people in a different social setup and circumstances. A person with a very low inclusion need is the social recluse who maintains distance between self and others. Such persons prefer aloofness social cohesion. On the other hand, there are many over social persons who put extra efforts into interacting with and attracting attention from others. Thirdly, the adaptable-social type is a person whose participation level is relative in nature, either high or low, depending on the situations.

The need *for control*, which represents the need to exercise power and authority, also varies a lot among different sections of people. You can find some people who have a strong urge to dominate, while others do not like to exert influence and feel happy allowing others to dominate and our content to make their own decisions for them. You can also find yet another sect of people who prefer to control others and in some situations like others to control them. They do not feel tempted to assert their influence and at the same time if they find an opportunity they do not avoid assuming leadership.

The *affection need* reflects the need for close, personal, positive feelings and comforts among people. Like the other needs, the affection need also vary a lot among the people. There are some people who like to suppress or deny their need for affection by nourishing openly antagonistic attitude or by being emotionally neutral towards everybpdy. There are some who cannot afford to annoy others, are afraid of not being liked and, therefore, they do everything possible to please others. In the middle are those who have the ability to be close to others but do not lose all sense of personal worth if someone does not like them.

The following table. indicates the above two aspects at a glance:

Need	Expressed Aspects	Wanted Aspects	Perception
<i>Inclusion</i>	You join others and ask others to join you.	You want others to ask you to join them	
<i>Control</i>	You influence and decide for others	You want others to influence and control you	
<i>Affection</i>	You act towards others in a close and personal way towards you	You want others to be close and personal	

b) The Transaction Perspective

The interpersonal behaviour is not only driven by the internal needs, people also pull behaviour from each other. This is termed as the “interpersonal reflex.”

The Interpersonal Reflex. The interpersonal behaviour can be reflected around two axes, dominance-submission and hostility-affection as indicated below:

The dominance-submission axis is comparable to the *control* area whereas the hostility-affection axis is regarded as a combination of inclusion and affection categories discussed above. The interpersonal actions are centered on these axes. The focal point of the two axes represents emotional neutrality: emotional intensity becomes greater as the distance from the centre increases. Interpersonal acts may lie between the axes. For instance, a given behavioural act may be both dominating and affectionate.

Domain

Hostility affection

Submission

Transactional analysis. Transactional analysis combines the above approach by looking at both the internal states of individuals (ego states) and their outward behaviour towards each other (transactions). There are three ego states-the Parent, the Adult and the Child as indicated in the following table:

<i>Parent</i>	Controlling Standard setting Nurturing
<i>Adult</i>	Information Processing
<i>Child</i>	Natural Little Professor Adapted

The Parent: In the parent-ego state; a person acts and speaks *parentally*, setting standards, making moral judgments, controlling or comforting and nurturing others.

The Adult: In the adult-ego state, a person seeks and gives factual information and uses logic to reach conclusions. The person is unemotional, calm, inquiring and seeking, like a good reporter, to objectively answer questions involving “who”, “what”, “how”, “why”, “when” and “where”.

The Child: The child-ego state includes the impulsive, uninhibited release of emotions such as joy, pleasure, outburst of excitement, anger, or rebellion (the natural child); intuitive, creative or manipulative behaviour (the little professor); and compliance with the demands of those in authority (the adapted child).

c) Positional Relationships

The position you occupy in your organization will determine your relationship with others working in the organisation. There are mainly three types of positional relationships:

- Superior-subordinate relationships,*
- Peer relationships, and*
- Serial relationships.*

Superior-Subordinate Relationships

Various studies by the researchers have unfolded that the superiors spend more than half of their time with their subordinates. If we consider the time spent by the superiors with their own boss, it becomes clear that an important factor in the functioning of an organization is the quality of communication between superiors and subordinates, which, in-turn, relates to the quality of their interpersonal relationships in the work environment.

However, in practical life difficulties may arise in such relationships. A number of barriers can hinder both upward and downward communication in organizations. Such barriers can be:

- Use of one-way messages,
- Differences between superiors' and subordinates' values and perceptions,
- Mistrust and the psychic conflicts
- Rivalry for leadership, a superior's attitudes and actions, such as unwillingness to admit error.

Considering the above potential barriers, it is evident that gaps in information flow and understanding exist between what a supervisor and subordinate perceive or believe to be true. Such differences are almost common on fundamental matters like job duties, performance expectations and the rights of subordinates to participate in decision - making process.

Peer Relationships

It is a normal human nature to nurture a feeling of superiority or inferiority, jealousy and competition, etc. Consequently, rivalry, to a certain extent, between people at the same level in an organization is quite natural. Dealing honestly with this rivalry is one of the most important aspects of integrity in peer relationships. However, achieving such honesty often does not come easily. However, this rivalry can be perceived from different points of view. In the context of peer relationship, a person with positive frame of mind will see that the rivalry and inequality in and of themselves are not entirely bad. Rather such a rivalry is an indicator that people are striving for excellence.

This approach requires that the peers should identify and pinpoint certain “useful goals toward which rivalry can be used as an instrument of action”. By such a previously and mutually shared vision the rivalry ‘cannot only be minimized but also can be legitimized with positive outcome.

Serial Relationships

Serial relationships in organizations involve people who act as relays, passing information from one more originating sources to a third party or parties. The production manager, who takes information from the R and D and communicates it as manufacturing specifications to production people. Relays are the important links that bind the organization together and as such they act like active connections cementing bonds. Here the information received by the production manager from the Rand D is converted into a language that can be understood by the production people. The role of the relayor is that of an integrator who acts like a unifying link and brings together the representatives of two or more groups in order to work out the problems easily and successfully.

Cross-Cultural Work Relationships

As you might have noticed and realized in your long work experience, the first law of communication is to expect miscommunication. If this is true in general, it is especially

true when the parties are from different cultural background. You have seen more and more people from diverse cultural backgrounds come and work in an organisation, which may have a diametrically different culture altogether. Therefore, the people in organizations face the challenge of bridging the wide cultural gaps in interpersonal relationships since the cultural diversity in the workplace increases as organizations start extending their global reach. The greater the difference between the parties cultures, the greater the risk of miscommunication.

Across the cultures, differences exist in several basic attitudes related to work as under:

Individualism /collectivism. In individualist cultures people are self - centered type and they are concerned primarily with taking care of exclusively themselves. By comparison, tight social groups in which members protect one another in exchange for loyalty denote collectivism.

Power distance. This dimension measures the extent to which subordinates accept that their boss has greater power than they do. In high power-distance countries, such as India, employees generally tend to believe that the boss is unquestionably right simply by virtue of being the boss.

Uncertainty avoidance. This measures the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguities, such as career instability. Everyone in the organization talks with everyone else, and members expect and encourage risk-taking in their relationships.

Adapting and Improving Relationships

The human relationship is a complex interplay of many factors that it is not feasible to formulate a simple step-by-step procedure for changing, and improving them. Though the mix and emphasis may vary, there are some steps that can be taken to improve their interpersonal situation:

- Make effective use of exposure and feedback,
- Talk about the communication process,
- Deal directly with disagreements, and
- Encourage the exercise of choice.