

A model for reducing organizational communication apprehension based on sex & years of work

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Abstract— Sex and the years of work in communication apprehension, political behavior and self-esteem were examined using the three years of work of cohorts of participants drawn from five or less, 5-15 and 15 or above populations. Results indicate that females with five or less years of work are higher communication apprehension than their males. Also, female at 15 or above are higher in political behavior and lower in self-esteem than their males counterparts. Political behavior and self-esteem show a consistent negative relationship that doesn't vary with the years of work or sex in the present sample. The degree to which political behavior and self-esteem predict communication apprehension varies with the years of work and sex. In all three years of work, political behavior and self-esteem are significant predictors of communication apprehension among women and men respectively.

Keywords-Communications; Political skills; Communication apprehension; Self-esteem.

1. Introduction

These days, in highly competitive environments, it is expected that the employees with the least facilities have the best efficiency. In addition to accepting some work responsibilities, they must also have high communication skills in doing their jobs [1]. Organizational communication is like a glue that keeps employees together. Also, it helps employees to achieve individual and organizational goals, implement, respond to organizational changes, and coordinate the organization's activities) [2,3]. One of the topics related to communication is communication apprehension; which means fear and anxiety that a person experiences before or during organizational communication with others [4]. According to the personality perspective, people are prone to communication apprehension because of their specific personality traits. There is a view that people with positive personality traits, such as high self-esteem have less anxiety in their interpersonal relationships, and a greater desire to communicate with others [5].

Communication apprehension is common and to some extent unavoidable, but it can be treated. In recent years, human communication experts have been noticed the treatment of communication apprehension. James McCroskey, a pioneer of human communication studies, believes two paths are useful to go through: firstly, improving communication skills and secondly, the treatment of communication avoidance itself. Communication skills can strengthen communication behaviors and give a person more ability to Communicating with others . Political skills, which refer to the ability to interpret the behavior of others and

create appropriate behavioral adaptations to influence them, are important communication skills in the organizational environment. They can be an antidote to communication apprehension and one of the merits of the interpersonal communication effectiveness in workplaces [6]. Although communication apprehension can affect all employees at different levels and all types of jobs, communication apprehension is an important problem for employees who work in political environments.

2. Literature review

2.1. Political skills

In the early 1980s, Feffer and Mintzberg introduced organizations as political entities. Also, both of them suggested that people need political skills to be effective in such environments [7]. According to Robbins (1983), all behaviors in the organization are political. Furthermore, power, politics, and influence are the very important realities of organizational life. Managers cannot and should not eliminate political skills in any organization. From the employees' point of view, the political nature of an organization's environment can affect their willingness to communicate with each other [8]. This is why, in recent years, a large number of organizational/industrial psychology researchers have emphasized political skills in interpersonal relationships. Political skills were first introduced by Ferris and his colleagues (1999) in the organizational/industrial psychology literature. It means the ability to understand the others in social settings effectively, and use such information to influence the others. These behaviors are aimed at achieving individual or organizational goals [9,10].

2.2. Communication apprehension

The concept of communication apprehension in the field of communication was introduced by James McCroskey for the first time in 1970s. He believed that it expresses the state of worry and anxiety when a person communicates with others. McCroskey (1977) introduced two types communication apprehensions: personality and situational. Personality communication apprehension is related to the people's personality characteristics. Changing these characteristics is somewhat impossible and difficult. Situational communication apprehension happens in certain time and place. People with personality communication apprehension experience apprehension in all communication situations such as interpersonal communication, speaking in meetings, groups, and any kind of gatherings. However, people who have situational apprehension may not be anxious in all communication situations [11].

In 1987, McCroskey and Richmond introduced four types of communication apprehensions: personality, situation, audience and position. Personality apprehension is mostly related to verbal communication, and refers to a person's readiness and tolerance to experience fear and anxiety in most communications. Situational apprehension means relative tolerance and personality apprehension that a person has in a specific context. For example, a person may experience high communication apprehension in public speaking, but not have any problems in two-person communication. Audience-related communication apprehension depends on the audience, the person or the type of people and a group that are present in communication. Positional communication apprehension depends on the changes in the environment that communication takes places [11].

The organization is one of the most common places that a person can experience communication apprehension. These individuals are less attractive and have less self-confident in the others' opinion. It can lead to their isolation and depression in the organization. In addition, these people have lower job satisfaction. Furthermore, communication apprehension has a negative effect on employees. Also, it has harmful effects in the organization such as increase in employee layoffs, high-level of stress, poor management, decrease of teamwork innovation, customer dissatisfaction [12].

People with high communication apprehension can't communicate with their colleagues, especially with their managers and supervisors very well. This problem makes them appear as an isolated, non-collaborative and ineffective person in the society. These people like jobs that require little contact with others. As a result, they are rarely promoted in their careers and lack leadership skills. These people do not show a desire to progress and

succeed .Eventually, these individuals usually choose isolationist behaviors and do not want to participate in communication with others; This is one of the major problems in the work environment and organization [13].

2.3. Self-esteem

The people in the organization have different personalities. Undoubtedly, many of these characters have an effect on the communication skills of employees [14]. According to the personality perspective, people are prone to communication apprehension because of their special personality traits, such as self-esteem, focus of control, self-efficacy, neurosis, and timidity. One of these personality traits that increase our understanding of organizational behavior is self-esteem.

Self-esteem is a feeling of worth and self-respect. Self-esteem plays an important role in thinking, feeling, and responding to stressful events in our life. It can have a positive or negative effect on the people in the organization. High self-esteem can improve job performance, managerial respect, strengthening communication, and increase the desire to communicate with others [15]. McCroskey and Richmond [11] considered self-esteem as one of the factors related to people's desire to communicate with others. In their opinion, people with high self-esteem have a greater desire to communicate with others. In other words, high self-esteem is like a shield that prevents stress and anxiety in the communication.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that willingness to communicate across different age groups are probably to be various in sex. Males tend to communicate with others more as their age increase. Females may show a parallel decrease in communications [16]. In the present study, we examined this hypothesis by testing communication apprehension among three years of workgroups. Hypotheses can be as follows:

H1: Communication apprehension will decrease in males and females across three years of work groups.

H2: Political skills will increase in males and females across three years of workgroups.

H3: Self-esteem will increase in males and females across three years of workgroups.

As mentioned above, communication apprehension is the anxiety that people experience when they communicate with others. According to classical theories of stress, when people face a situation that they cannot control, they become stressful [17]. Perrewé et al. [18] and Brouer et al. [19] have explained that people with political skills have high self-confidence and power in interacting with others. Also, they are able to reduce some of the stress and anxiety caused by communicating with others. Folkman & Lazarus [20] have shown that political skills facilitate coping with stressful situations by giving a sense of power to control interpersonal relationships. The results of other research have also supported the effect of political skills on anxiety. For example, Treadway et al. [21] have expressed that employees with low political skills who work in political environments endure more anxiety compared to others. Sternberg and his colleagues [22] believe that employees with high political skills are all tended to the development of different communication networks with others.

The perception of having low competence to perform a task can make a person to be stressful while performing the task. Also, high communication apprehension can lead to lower evaluations of person's competence [9,16]. Greenberg et al. [24] have shown that high self-esteem prevents the feeling of anxiety. The results of the research of Ferris and his colleagues (2011) have been explained that political skills have a direct effect on the psychological health and self-esteem of people. The results of Fulmer's study [15] have been shown that people with low self-esteem tend to communicate with others more less. Furthermore, Bandelli [9] represented that political skills have a positive effect on communication skills and personality traits. Also, they can facilitate interpersonal communication.

Ardeshizadeh & Farhangi [25] confirmed that relationship management and social networking ability have a negative effect on communication apprehension. The results of the research of Rahimnia & Farzaneh Hassanzadeh [26] have been shown that the perception of the political environment in the organization and the its negative aspects of political skills increase the employees' communication apprehension. People with low self-esteem have more communication apprehension. However, These individuals have few communication skills and this low skills cause high anxiety and less tendency to communicate with others [4]. In the following, other hypotheses have been mentioned:

H4: The correlation between political skills and self-esteem differ between males and females at various years of work.

H5: The political skills and self-esteem predict communication apprehension in the sex and years of work in this study.

3. Methodology

The statistical population of this research is all the municipal employees of central Khorasan province in Iran. The population number is 560 people. In this study, the target population is limited and sampling is done without placement. Furthermore, the questionnaire is based on the Likert scale to collect data. The Likert scale is an interval and averaging scale. Therefore, the limited population sampling formula was used to determine the sample size [27]. Eventually, the sample size is 230 individuals in the confidence level of 0.95. Furthermore, 10 percent was considered to solve the problem of not answering the questionnaire. Thus, the sample size is 253 people. In this study, simple random sampling method was used. Employees including managers and experts are the main target for collecting data.

In the terms of method and gathering information, the study is descriptive and correlational. To collect theoretical information and identifying indicators, an exploratory study was conducted. Also, the data were collected through questionnaires with three sections, namely, political skills, self-esteem and communication apprehension. A five-point Likert scale was used for each question, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Ferris et al. [6] measurements, consisting of 18 items, were used for political skills. The measurements provided by Rosenberg [28] and McCroskey [29], consisting of ten items and twenty-four, were used for self-esteem and organizational communication apprehension respectively.

The questionnaire was given to nine academic and experimental experts in the fields of organizational behavior. Also, the necessary amendments were done and approved by them about the questionnaire. For evaluating the construct validity of the questionnaire, the convergent validity and divergent validity were used (the method of determining average variance extracted index). The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was obtained with SPSS 24 and Cronbach's alpha method. The results have been shown in Table 1.

Table1. Validity & Reliability Measurement

Dimensions	Questions	Questionnaire	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE, \sqrt{AVE}
Political skills	18	Ferris et als' (2005)	0.82	0.88	0.65, 0.80
Self-esteem	10	Rosenburg (1965)	0.74	0.78	0.53, 0.72
Communication apprehension	24	McCroskey(1982)	0.81	0.80	0.52 , 0.72

For assessing convergent validity, AVE value should be more than 0.5. Considering the average extracted variance (AVE) for all variables is higher than 0.5 in this study (Table 2). It can be said that the questionnaire has an acceptable convergent validity. Also, placing the square root of AVE instead of number one in the main diameter of the matrix presented in Table 3. It can be concluded that this value for each of the variables is more than the correlation of one construct with other constructs. Thus, the questionnaire has an acceptable divergent validity.

The Cronbach's alpha for each of the variables in this study is higher than 0.7 and the composite reliability coefficient (CR) is higher than 0.6. Furthermore, the reliability of the entire questionnaire is 84% using the Cronbach's alpha method. Thus, it can be stated that the questionnaire has good reliability. In this study, SPSS 24 software were used for the statistical analysis of the data and testing the hypotheses. Also, SMARTPLS3 software was used to assess the questionnaire validity and reliability.

4. Results

4.1. Testing the hypotheses

As reflected in hypothesis one (H1), communication apprehension was expected to decrease in males and females with the years of work. But self-esteem and political skills were expected to show the reverse trend (H2 & H3). To test these three hypotheses while minimizing type 1 error, a 2 (male, female) by 3 (5 or less, 5-15, 15 or above) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with communication apprehension, political skills and self-esteem as the dependent variables.

The results show that at the multivariate level, the main effect of the years of work is significant (Hotelling's $F(7,143)=12.67=0.106$, $p<0.01$) however, the main effect of sex is not (Hotelling's $F(4,74)=1.37=0.007$, $p>0.05$). The main effect of the years of work is qualified by a significant interaction between sex and age group (Hotelling's $F(7,143)=3.50=0.029$, $p<0.01$).

At the univariate level, the main effect of the years of work and the interaction between sex and the years of work have significant effects on all three dependent variables. Univariate results are summarized in Table 2 and means are displayed in Table 3. Post-hoc Tukey's HSD tests (see Table 3) show that females report more political behaviors than males in the five or less years of work, but there are no significant differences in political behaviors between men and women in either the 5-15 and 15 or above.

Among the 5 or less and 5-10 years of workgroups, no significant sex differences in communication apprehension and lower self-esteem than men.

Table2. Univariate ANOVA results for the effects of sex and years of work cohort on political skills, self-esteem & communication apprehension

	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2
sex	1.95	0.003	0.48	0.002	0.05	0.000
Years of work	7.34**	0.018	18.08**	0.049	20.55**	0.054
Sex \times years of work cohort	6.47**	0.016	6.95**	0.021	3.84*	0.011

$p^*<0.05, p^{**}<0.01$

Table3. Means for political behavior, self-esteem, and communication apprehension

	5 or less			5-15			15 or above		
	Males	Females	Q	Males	Female	Q	Males	Females	Q
Communication apprehension	73.31	82.43	4.96**	85.67	87.86	1.02	82.77	77.06	2.31
Political skills	27.04	23.72	2.53	23.17	22.67	0.67	29.78	39.19	4.67**
Self-esteem	81.33	88.72	2.59	99.22	99.71	0.07	90.54	82.12	2.98*

$p^*<0.05, p^{**}<0.01$

The degree of correlation between political and self-esteem was tested for expected difference among the means. However, it does not show it (H4). In Table2, the correlation between them. It was computed for males and females separately in the three years of work groups. Testing the difference between independent correlations [30] were conducted to understand whether the strength of relationship between political skills and self-esteem differed according to sex in the three years of work. No evidence of such differences was shown. However, the data displayed a weak to moderate negative relationship between political skills and self-esteem for both sexes and across the years of work.

Table4. Correlation between political skills & self-esteem

	Males	Females	Z
5 or less	0.210*	0.36**	1.17
10-15	0.41**	0.43**	0.08
15 or above	0.32*	0.42**	0.97
All cohorts	0.31**	0.41	1.62

p* < 0.05, p** < 0.01

In order to examine H5, multiple regression analyses were conducted. Political behavior and self-esteem were used to predict communication apprehension for each sex in each years of work. Regression results are summarized in Table 5. Among 5 or less the years of work, self-esteem, but not political behavior, predict communication apprehension, but self-esteem and political behavior predict communication apprehension among females with 5 or less years of work. Among the 5-15 group, self-esteem predicts communication apprehension for females. Among adults of both sexes, both political behavior and self-esteem emerge as significant predictors of communication apprehension. Thus, among males, self-esteem is the most consistent predictor of communication apprehension across the years of work groups, but for females political behavior is the most consistent predictor of communication apprehension across the cohort studied.

Table 5. Results of regression analyses predicting communication apprehension

		Political behavior	Self-esteem	Beta
		F	Beta	
5 or less	Males	8.33**	-.210	-.322**
	Females	33.43***	-.347***	-.295***
10-15	Males	14.46***	-.103	-.446***
	Females	7.69**	-.253*	-.145
15 or above	Males	31.73***	-.323**	-.531***
	Females	76.02***	-.167**	-.559***
All cohorts	Males	43.35***	-.198**	-.421***
	Females	106.12***	-.278***	.371***

p* < 0.05, p** < 0.01, p*** < 0.001

5. Discussion

In this study the hypotheses were supported partially. Females rather than males had higher communication apprehension among the first years of workgroup (5 or less) (See H1). Also, hypotheses H2 and H3 were received partial support. There is no sex differences in political behavior and self-esteem between two years of work (5 or less & 5-15). However, the females had higher political behavior and lower self-esteem rather than the males. As females move toward an adult world, especially in the developing countries. They seek opportunities equality in society. They are suppressed. It can affect on their communication apprehension level.

The effect size in Table 1 are small. This is consistent with Canary & House's [31], Donovan & Macintyre [16]. This study did not produce any compelling evidence, in terms of communication apprehension, of the increasing pervasive silencing among women in the developing countries. There are lacks empirical support [16]. The political behavior and lower self-esteem observed in the 15 or above years of work. Women

might , over time, produce sex difference in communication apprehension that disadvantage women. This might be investigated in the future research.

The positive correlation between political skills and self-esteem did not differ between men and women in any of the three years of workgroups (H4). Political skills increase employees self-esteem. Self-esteem is the ability to see oneself as a positive, worthy, and successful person. Political skills increase the feeling of self-confidence, and personal security, or control over the activities that happen in their social interactions in the organization. Furthermore, it causes these people can gain the approval of others. Also, they believe themselves and feel self-worth, competence, and success. In the opinion of these people, individual interactions are as opportunities and not threats. Thus, they become less anxious [23].

People who have high political skills feel more secure and self-esteem than other people who lack this ability. People with political skills have high self-esteem. These people are able to understand social situations and interactions well with others because of their social awareness and this makes others like them and feel comfortable with them. This allows them to gain the approval of others. On the other hand, skill in pretentious honesty makes people look trustworthy. Thus, they can achieve self-esteem. In addition, people with political skills have good social networks. It enables them to create a favorable image of themselves in the society by contributing to the successes of others and attributing their successes to themselves. Therefore, political skills increase the self-esteem of employees. Also, when a person has self-esteem try to behave appropriately. Thus, he tends to understand the political environment[10, 21].

The regression analyses for testing H5 show that the relationship between communication apprehension and its antecedents is not straightforward. Also, it may vary with the years of work and sex. Political skills predicted communication apprehension in females across all three the years of work cohorts and self-esteem was the most consistent predictor of communication apprehension among males suggests that these two variables support communication apprehension in two sexes differently. Sex differences in these underlying processes should be investigated in the future studies. Furthermore, a longitudinal study might be expected to yield interesting results.

As mentioned political behaviors can predict communication apprehension and reduce it among females in three the years of work. Communication apprehension is due to stress and anxiety that people experience in communicating with others. Political skills can be an antidote to this stress. Because people with political skills are more successful in developing and leveling capital and social networks. The management of these networks and social capital make people with political skills control more of their workplace . Also, it can increase their social support and their ability to cope with stressful factors. According to resource based view, political skills help people to face with the stress in workplace, People with key resources such as control, self-confidence, and social support have a high ability to choose, change, and use their other resources to face with stressful relationships and environments.

Political skills make people have the ability to accurately assess their environment and show the best response to it. Therefore, people with these skills understand their workplace well, and this gives them a sense of control and self-confidence, and this, in turn, makes them understand situations, control themselves and others, and reduce uncertainty and stress. Also, people with high political skills consider political environments as an opportunity to use their expertise instead of being stressful. In other words, these people have high emotional intelligence[32] .

Regarding political skills, it is suggested that some of these skills are inherent. Some of them can be learned and acquired. Managers and employees can benefit from these training courses. Various training programs can be designed to encourage such abilities. Internship meetings, executive coaching and books about leadership , organizational and human communication can also be useful for people who seek to acquire communication and political skills.

As mentioned above, it is very important to have self-esteem in the workplace. It can cause job promotion, professional , social and personal motivations, and reduce employees' lack of communication apprehension. Therefore, it is recommended to the employees to respect others and acquire skills in this area to increase their self-esteem. Also, managers delegate authority and responsibility to their employees, be honest and trust them,

be creative and innovative, treat others carefully, and raise their self-awareness.

Eventually, it is also recommended to the human resource department that holding classes and courses on communication and political skills and methods of strengthening self-esteem for managers and employees as one of the factors to reduce communication apprehension. Furthermore, the organization should try to eliminate communication apprehension, especially in females at the beginning of their careers in the organization.

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