

Evaluation of the managers' communication skills based on systematic approach in Petroleum Welfare Services Company

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Abstract

The present paper represents a summary of the results of a research conducted with the purpose of studying the relationship between the managers' communication skills based on a systematic approach in Welfare Services Company during 2012-2013. The research population included 260 senior and intermediate managers and supervisors of the company, who held at least a high school diploma with different levels of experience and age groups. The research method is based on field and library study. The research instruments are Barton's standard questionnaire, and the researcher designed questions, which were selected randomly in the questions. The method of data analysis was descriptive statistics, and the researcher tried to draw on a systematic approach to evaluate the managers' communications skills in Petroleum Welfare Services Company. Thus, the statistical technique of a mean of population (t-test) was applied to test the research questions which were analyzed in SPSS. Based on the obtained results, the overall mean of the systematic approach of the company's managers in three levels showed that the approach of managers of Welfare Services Company to communication processes follows a systematic approach pattern. The results obtained from mean test showed that the qualification of the managers in three levels of Petroleum Welfare Services Company (senior, intermediate, supervisors) with regard to the use of verbal skills, listening skills, and feedback skills, and also with regard to the use of communication skills is an acceptable system.

Keywords: Communication, systematic approach, verbal skill, listening skill, feedback skill

Introduction

Communication is a complex process. An organization as a social institution requires communication. Communication is one of the basic elements of management. The managers have found that effective communication with employees and understanding their motivation are influential factors in the managers' success to achieve the organization's planned objectives. Without an effective communication system, managers would not be able to carry out their duties efficiently (Sarookhani, 1992).

Researches have shown that managers spent 50-80 % of their time on communication in different ways such as face-to-face and telephone conversations, meetings and conferences, lectures, interviews, as well as formal and informal communication, using signs and signals, as well as body and hand movements and facial expressions. It may be said that many of managers fail to establish effective communication, or when effective communication is actually established, they can not provide organizational collaborative environment. This phenomenon imposes so many intangible costs on organizations annually (Hersey & Blanchard, 1979). For example, based on the reports and calculations, in Petroleum Welfare Services Company, in average IRR.2, 000,000,000/- to IRR.4, 500,000,000/- is annually spent for holding different meetings and conferences. If managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) follow a systematic approach to the process of individual and organizational communication, and proportional to the degree of its influence on the managers' career success, they can develop their well-informed communication processes and all communication skills, which can help prevent costs significantly, and enhance the effectiveness of management decision-makings (Farhangi, 1994).

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Now, the main question is that does managers follow a systematic approach to communication skills as well as individual and organizational communication? To answer this question, first, it is necessary to determine what the system means, and how the systematic approach works. According to Bertalanffy, a system is composed of elements in standing relations, and a systematic approach is an oriented and holistic mindset and a view which allows us to know forces and variables which have a major impact on the internal and external environments of the organization, and help us understand their function and position in the organization. In view of management, a systematic approach inspires managers to consider organizations as a whole and a part of a larger environment (Foulger, 2004). In a systematic approach, an organization is seen as a living organism which not only affects the environment, but also is affected by it as well (Bittle, 1990). So, we can conclude that communication processes have also systematic features, and they should be necessarily seen as systematic processes. Because:

- 1- A communication process comprises of separate subsidiary systems and elements
- 2- There is a communication process, correlation, solidarity, and interaction between components and elements or subsidiary systems
- 3- Components and elements of a communication process comprise a whole or a complex system which has features more than the total of its componential features (Haghighi *et al*, 2003).

Considering the significance of the systematic approach in creating processes which are led to organizational effectiveness, the researcher sought to conduct a research on managers' communication skills based on systematic approach, to shed light on the status of managers of Petroleum Welfare Services Company, who can accordingly improve their communication with their employees. The main question of this research is as follows:

Is the approach of managers of Petroleum Welfare Services Company in three levels (senior, intermediate, and supervisors) use to communication skills systematic or not?

On the one hand, the present research is useful because the source of many social, organizational and individual problems can be traced back to the lack of effective communication, the role of communication systems, and in general, communication misinterpretation. Also, the rate of managers' enjoyment of each of the managers' communication skills is measured, and on the other hand, it is found whether these managers' approach to these skills is systematic or not.

Since this study determines the rate of managers' present communication skills, and also whether the managers' approach toward these skills is systematic or not, it could be useful for the organization's authorities and could be applied by them. Given the significance of managers' effective communication in an organization, the effectiveness of organizations in advancing their goals, and the shortage of research in this area, specially in Iran, the researcher decided to study the relationship between the managers' communication skills in Petroleum Welfare Services Company, and whether the managers' approach to these skills is systematic or not.

The research questions can be stated as follows:

- 1- Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use verbal skills?
- 2- Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use listening skills?
- 3- Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use feedback skills?
- 4- Is the approach of managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company to communication skills systematic or not?

Materials and Methods

The basis of each science is the knowledge of that, and the validity and value of scientific laws are based on the methodology used in that science. If the methodology is not considered properly, undoubtedly the results of a research would mislead the researcher and users. Given this issue, adopting a rational approach with a scientific spirit and realistic discipline is necessary to achieve desired results. Generally, it could be said that the research methodology is a set of rules, instruments and valid (reliable) and systematic ways to investigate realities, discover unknowns, and achieve the solution for problems (Khaki, 1999).

Purpose of Research

Applied research is a type of research which applies theories, laws, principles, and techniques developed in basic research, to solve real and practical problems (Khaki, 1999). In this study the type of research by purpose is an applied research. In an applied research, after going through different processes of research and testing of the hypotheses, the researcher obtains the result, and finally, some suggestions are shared for the statistical population of the research.

Method of research

One of the most important procedures of scientific research is the selection of the research method that fits the research to be conducted. The selection of the method of conducting research means to determine which research method is fit to study an especial subject. The researcher is responsible for selecting the research method, and he/she should be sensitive in selecting the appropriate method for research, and choose a method that discovers rules and realities more accurately than other methods (Delavar, 2005).

As for the nature and method, the present research is belongs to category of descriptive-surveying studies, because it tries to evaluate the managers' communication skills based on a systematic approach in Petroleum Welfare Services Company. In this study, the field study method was mainly used for collecting data related to testing research

hypotheses. On the other hand, Persian and English references are available in libraries, proceedings, specialty monthly for the compilation and organization of the research literature and theoretical principles, and publications related to the research topic, as well as, the Internet, websites of scientific, academic and national scientific documents centers were used.

In doing any research, specifying the statistical population is one of the requirements, because the researcher should already know the scope of his/her work to collect information and data required for the study and analysis. The statistical population of this research includes senior, intermediate and supervising managers working in Petroleum Welfare Services Company. The data of senior, intermediate, and supervising managers working in the company are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistical Population

Organizational Level	Rank 16	Rank 17	Rank A	Rank B	Rank C	Rank 99	Total
Senior Managers	8	7	4	2	1	-	23
Intermediate Managers	48	91	32	-	-	-	171
Supervising Managers	39	27	-	-	-	-	66
Total	93	126	37	3	1	-	260

Evaluation of the Research Statistical Population

In this study, a questionnaire was used for collecting data required for the research. The questionnaire used in this study comprises of 18 questions about the evaluation of managers' communication skills with a systematic approach. This questionnaire was developed based on Barton's questionnaire. To measure the managers' communication skills, these skills were classified into 3 verbal, listening and feedback skills and 6 items were further proposed for each skill.

To evaluate the manager's systematic approach, 4 items were added to the questionnaire to measure the manager's systematic approach to the communication process. To specify the sample size and given the limitation of the statistical population, Cochran's formula was used for the limited population (260 persons).

$$n = \frac{N \times z^2 \alpha/2 \times \delta^2}{(N - 1) \times \varepsilon^2 + z^2 \alpha/2 \times \delta^2}$$

N = Size of statistical population

n = Statistical sample size

Z = Value of normal variable corresponding to the considered level of confidence for the confidence interval of 95% which is 1.96.

σ^2 = Variance of the population which has been considered equal to 0.5

ε = Allowable error which is equal to 0.05

$$n = \frac{260 \times (1.96)^2 \times (0.5)^2}{(260 - 1) \times (0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2 \times (0.5)^2} \approx 155$$

Based on Cochran's formula, the obtained statistical sample is equal to 155 persons, and to ensure the sufficient number of collected questionnaires, 200 questionnaires with convenience sampling method were distributed. From among all distributed questionnaires, 177 questionnaires were recollected.

In this research, in order to assess the validity of the questionnaire, logical validity as a type of content validity was used. Also, in order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha scale was used. Based

on the advice of the researcher's consulting and thesis advisors, 30 questionnaires were distributed to measure the reliability. Then, SPSS was used for validation, and the value of the obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was found to be 0.744. Also, the value of the obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each variable of the research and their related components has been specified in the following table.

Research variables and components

Table 2: Variables and Cronbach's alpha values

The studied variables	Cronbach's Alpha Scale
Feedback skill	0.824
Listening skill	0.803
Verbal skill	0.756
Systematic communication skill	0.804

Table 3: The Results of descriptive statistics related to the first question

Variable	Number of Data	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Use of verbal skill	177	0640/4	83010/0	06239/0

Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics which respectively shows the number of data, mean of responses, standard deviation, standard error of means for the variable, verbal skill. Based on the

Results

Given the fact that the researcher tried to take a systematic approach to evaluate the managers' communication skills in Petroleum Welfare Services Company, 4 questions were proposed, and in this way, the statistical technique of mean population was used to analyze the data and test the research questions.

First Questions: Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use verbal skill?

Statistical Hypothesis:

H_0 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) do not use verbal skill efficiently.

H_1 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) use verbal skill efficiently.

Table 3, the mean is more than 3, but to test the raised question, Table 4 which represents inferential statistics (hypothesis test and confidence interval) should be used.

Table 4: Results of inferential statistics related to the first question

Variable	t Coefficient	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Test Value = 3		
				Mean Difference	Confidence Level= 95% Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Using verbal skill	053/17	176	000/0	06403/1	9409/0	1872/1

In Table 4, as the significance level is less than 0.05, the hypothesis of the equality of mean is rejected. Therefore, we study the status of the variable, using verbal skill, based on the lower and upper limit. Given that the lower limit (0.9409) and upper limit (1.1872) are both positive in this hypothesis, the mean would be greater than the tested value (3). So, we can conclude that the mean of variable, using verbal skill, is more than 3, and the status of using verbal skill by the three-level (senior, intermediate,

supervising) managers of Petroleum Welfare Services Company is acceptable and H_0 is rejected.

Second Questions: Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use listening skills?

Statistical Hypothesis:

H_0 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) do not use listening skill efficiently.

H_1 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) use listening skill efficiently.

Table 5: The results of descriptive statistics related to the second question

Variable	Number of Data	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Use of listening skill	177	1836/3	16587/1	08763/0

Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics which respectively shows the number of data, mean of responses, standard deviation, and standard error of mean for the variable, using the listening skills.

Based on Table 5, the mean is more than 3, but to test the question, Table 6 which represents inferential statistics (hypothesis test and confidence interval) should be used.

Table 6: The results of inferential statistics related to the second question

Variable	t Coefficient	Degree of Freedom	Test Value = 3			
			Significance Level	Mean Difference	Confidence Level= 95%	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Using listening skill	095/2	176	038/0	18362/0	0107/0	3566/0

In Table 6, as the significance level is less than 0.05, the hypothesis of the equality of mean is rejected. Therefore, we study the status of the variable, using listening skill, based on the lower and upper limits. Given that the lower limit (0.0107) and upper limit (0.3566) are both positive, in this hypothesis, the mean would be greater than the tested value (3). So, we can conclude that the mean of variable using listening skill is more than 3, and the status of using listening skill by the three levels of managers (senior,

intermediate, supervising) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company is acceptable and H_0 is rejected.

Third Questions: Do the managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company use feedback skills?

Statistical Hypothesis:

H_0 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) do not use feedback skill efficiently.

H_1 = Managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) use feedback skill efficiently.

Table 7: Results of descriptive statistics related to the third question

Variable	Number of Data	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Use of feedback skill	177	0188/4	81531/0	06128/0

Table 7 displays the descriptive statistics which respectively shows the number of data, mean of responses, standard deviation, and standard error of mean for the variable, using feedback skills. Based

on Table 7, the mean is more than 3, but to test the question, Table 8 which represents inferential statistics (hypothesis test and confidence interval) should be used.

Table 8: Results of inferential statistics related to the third question

Variable	t Coefficient	Degree of Freedom	Test Value = 3			
			Significance Level	Mean Difference	Confidence Level= 95%	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Using feedback skill	625/16	176	000/0	01883/1	8979/0	1398/1

In Table 8, as the significance level is less than 0.05, the hypothesis of the equality of mean is rejected. Therefore, we study the status of the variable, using feedback skill based on the lower and upper limits. Given that the lower limit (0.8979) and upper limit (1.1398) are both positive, in this hypothesis, the mean would be greater than the tested value (3). So, we can conclude that the mean of variable of using feedback skill is more than 3, and the status of using feedback skill by the three levels of managers (senior, intermediate, supervising) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company is in the acceptable level and H_0 is rejected.

Fourth Question: Is the approach of managers of three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company to communication skills systematic or not?

Statistical Hypothesis:

H_0 = the approach of managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) to systematic communication skills is not favorable.

H_1 = the approach of managers (senior, intermediate, supervisors) to systematic communication skills is favorable.

Table 9: Results of descriptive statistics related to the fourth question

Variable	Number of Data	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Systematic Communication Skills	177	4449/4	69964/0	05259/0

Table 9 displays the descriptive statistics which respectively shows the number of data, mean of responses, standard deviation, and standard error of mean for the variable, using systematic communica-

tion skills. Based on Table 9, the mean is more than 3, but to test the raised question, Table 10 which represents inferential statistics (hypothesis test and confidence interval) should be referred to.

Table 10: Results of inferential statistics related to the fourth question

Variable	t Coefficient	Degree of Freedom	Test Value = 3			
			Significance Level	Mean Difference	Confidence Level= 95%	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Systematic Communication Skills	476/27	176	000/0	44492/1	3411/1	5487/1

In Table 10, as the significance level is less than 0.05, the hypothesis of the equality of mean is rejected. Therefore, we study the status of the variable using systematic communication skills based on the lower and upper limits. Given that the lower limit (1.3411) and upper limit (1.5487) are both positive, in this hypothesis, the mean would be greater than the tested value (3). So, we can conclude that the mean of variable of using systematic communication skills is more than 3, and the status of using systematic communication skills by the three levels of managers (senior, intermediate, supervising) of Petroleum Welfare Services Company is in acceptable and H_0 is rejected.

Conclusion

In this study, the managers' communication skills in Petroleum Welfare Services Company

were evaluated based on a systematic approach. Having specified the type and method of research, the researcher analyzed the collected data and tested the research questions using mean of population test, and finally, based on the results obtained from the relation between managers communication skills (verbal, listening, feedback), and the managers' systematic thinking and looking to these skills, it was found that three verbal, listening and feedback skills in the managers of Petroleum Welfare Services Company are in an acceptable status, and the company managers' approach to communication (verbal, listening, and feedback) skills is a systematic acceptable. Therefore, based on the results of the conducted research, it can be concluded that if the managers in three levels (senior, intermediate, supervisors) have a systematic approach to organization-

al and individual communication process, and proportional to the degree of its influence on the managers' career success, they can develop their well-informed communication processes and all communication skills. Thus, they can significantly prevent huge costs, and the effectiveness of management decisions can be increased. Some research suggestions for the development of communication skills are as follows:

1- Since the systematic model of communications and communication models in managers' level are very efficient, it is recommended that a mid-term training course (at least 3-4 weeks) is designed and held for employees.

2- Communication skills are achieved through lots of practice over time, so their learning is very important for managers. It is suggested that all managers of the three levels have workshop practice at least for one month (100 hours).

3- In order to promote employees to higher levels, along with company annual evaluation, tests and interviews related to communication skills should be administered, so that confirmed improvements may positively affect employees' salaries and allowances.

4- Before any personal appointment or employing individuals in different specialized positions, they should be tested and approved with regard to communication skills, and in case they possess such skills, they should be introduced for special training courses.

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