# Communication Skills of Students Who Have Taken Healthcare Communication Lessons

Ozgur INCE, Halil SOYAL, Onur YARAR

***Abstract*—** Nowadays, communication holds a quite significant place in both everyday life and work life of healthcare personnel. This study was carried out to make, by means of various parameters, an emotional, behavioural, and cognitive assessment of communication skills of students, who study at the Okan University Vocational School of Healthcare Services (VSHS) and who have taken Healthcare Communications lessons. In this study, 205 VSHS students having taken Healthcare Communications lessons were taken as sample. The data in the study were obtained through the *"Communication Skills Inventory"* developed by Ersanlı and Balcı (1998) and a *"Personal Information Form"* aimed at determining the demographic information of students who took part in survey. In our study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were found to be 0.87 in the emotional dimension, 0.93 in the behavioural dimension and 0.91 in the cognitive dimension. The data we obtained showed that female students were better than male students in terms of Communication Skills.

***Keywords*—**Communication Skills, Healthcare Services, Communication, Student Communication Skills

## I. Introduction

As a term of very frequent use in the present day, communication is a multi-channel process which involves the sharing of emotions, thoughts, and knowledge between two persons in order to understand each other.[1] There are many definitions made for communication. In the Dictionary of Educational Terms, communication is defined as the sharing of a thought or emotion from one person to another through gestures of the face, hands, arms or head, through speaking or through the use of other tools and means of communication such as writing, telephone, radio, and television.[2]

Communication is a way for a person to express himself, his emotions, thoughts, and needs, and to understand others. It is a process related to the sharing of emotions, thoughts, and knowledge between two persons in order to understand each other.[3]

Efficient communication skills can make relationships easier in all sorts of human relations including those in the professional field. Especially those persons who work in professional fields where they have to deal with more people must have better command of communication skills.[2] Since healthcare personnel are one of the occupational groups mentioned above, they need to be well-informed about efficient communication skills.

If communication techniques are used wrong, no adequate relations can be established with the patients, and as result, the individual will be deprived of the chance to express 0

available for use by healthcare personnel, communication is still seen as the essence of clinical procedures during the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, because it has strong influence on the patients' relationship to healthcare personnel as well as their satisfaction of the way they are treated.[3]

Recent acts of violence which have been faced in our country due to lack of communication have proven once more that measurement of healthcare personnel's communication skills is a very important issue.

In this study, we tried to analyze, in the light of various variables, the communication skills of VSHS students, which they must have so that they can cope with the communication problems they might face in work life after graduation, and to find out whether there are any differences according to variables.

## II. Material And Method

In this research, we tried to reach a conclusion over an existing situation, while the research sample consisted of 205 students who are currently studying at the Okan University Vocational School of Healthcare Services and who have taken Healthcare Communications lessons. In the beginning, the research sample had consisted of 435 students who were taking and attending Healthcare Communications lessons in the fall and spring semester of 2015-2016, but in the end the survey could be applied to only 205 students. +/- acceptable error with a 95% confidence level recommended sample size of 205 was reached. The purpose of survey was to analyze the communication skills of VSHS students as prospective healthcare personnel, and identify the academic and scientific studies necessary to eliminate any deficiencies.

The *"Personal Information Form"* developed to gather data was created in such manner to facilitate comparison of the students' communication skills according to various criteria. As another means of data gathering, we made use of the *"Communication Skills Inventory"* developed by Ersanlı and Balcı (1998). The *"Communication Skills Inventory"* takes a three-dimensional approach to the student's

Ozgur İnce, T.C. Okan University, Vocational School of Health Service, Istanbul, 34722 Turkey
Halil Soyal, T.C. Okan University, Vocational School of Health Service, Istanbul, 34722 Turkey
Onur Yarar, T.C. Okan University, Vocational School of Health Service, Istanbul, 34722 Turkey

communication skills to assess them from an emotional, behavioural, and cognitive standpoint.

The communication skills inventory (CSI) developed by Ersanlı and Balcı is a 5-point graded Likert-type inventory. In the validity and reliability checks carried out by Balcı and Ersanlı, it was found that r= .64, whereas in the repeat test it was found that r= .68. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient calculated to determine the inventory's internal consistency is .72. A parallel form application was carried out in relation to the inventory's validity check. To that end, its correlation with the "Communication Skills Assessment Scale" developed by Korkut (1996) was looked at, and the correlation coefficient was found to be r= .70. The scale consists of a total of 45 expressions, while the highest and lowest scores that can be obtained are 225 and 45, respectively. The scale comprises three sub-dimensions, namely emotional, behavioural, and cognitive. Every sub-scale can be assessed in separate or the scale can be assessed as a whole to identify the general communication skills level of an individual. The highest and lowest scores that can be obtained from each sub-scale are 75 and 15, respectively. It can be said that the higher the score in a subscale, the better the communication skills in that subscale. For the scale as a whole, a high overall score of an individual is indicative of high communication skills in general.[4]

In our study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were found to be 0.87 in the emotional dimension, 0.93 in the behavioural dimension and 0.91 in the cognitive dimension. The data we obtained showed that female students were better than male students in terms of Communication Skills.

## III. Results

The students participating in research consisted of male students to 46,8% (n=96) and female students to 53,1% (109).

When we looked at the students' age group, it was seen that the 17-20 age group corresponded to 23,4% (n=48), the 20-23 age group to 35,1% (n=72), the 23-26 age group to 16% (n=33), the 26-29 age group to 11,2% (n=23), and the age group 29 and above corresponded to 14,1% (n=29).

With regard to the high school which the students graduated from, it was seen that, from among the students participating in the survey, 20,4% had graduated from a medical vocational high school (n=42), whereas 79,5% had graduated from other vocational high schools (n=163).

With regard to the educational background of the students' parents, the rate of Illiterate Mother and Father was found to be 3,4% (n=7) and 2,3% (n=5) respectively, the rate of Primary School Graduate Mother and Father 12,6% (n=26) and 11,7% (n=24) respectively, the rate of Secondary School Graduate Mother and Father 35,6% (n=73) and 42,9% (n=88) respectively, the rate of High School Graduate Mother and Father 27,3% (n=56) and 16% (n=33) respectively, and the rate of University (or higher) Graduate Mother and Father 20,9% (n=43) and 26,8% (n=55) respectively.

In terms of family income levels, the answers given by the students taking part in survey showed the followings: less than minimum wage 12,1% (n=25), minimum wage up to 1500 TL 20% (n=41), between 1501-2250 TL 32,1% (n=66), between 2250-5000 TL 19% (n=39), and 5000 TL or above 34% (n=34).

As can be seen in Table 1, a statistically significant difference could be observed in the general communication skill levels as well as in Behavioural and Emotional Communication skills levels according to the students' age ($p<0.05$), whereas no statistically significant difference could be observed in their Intellectual Communication skills ($p>0.05$).

The difference between the students' communication skills levels according to gender was found to be statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

With regard to the high schools they graduated from, it was found that the general communication skill levels of students graduated from other vocational high schools was higher than the group that had graduated from a medical vocational high school, and that the difference between them was statistically significant.

Results of the variance analysis which was applied to the scores obtained in the communication skills dimension of the Communication Skills Inventory emerging as result of research are shown in Table 2.

When we look at Table 2.1, it can be seen that the variance analysis applied to the scores of CSI intellectual communication skills showed no significance as to basic and common factors. This, in return, shows that there is no significant difference in terms of emotional communication skills between male and female students who take Healthcare Communications lessons at Okan University.

When we look at Table 2.2, it can be seen that the variance analysis applied to CSI emotional communication skills showed a statistically significant difference between the students of Okan University, according to gender, graduation, and age.

TABLE 1
COMMUNICATION SKILLS LEVEL ACCORDING TO AGE, GENDER, AND GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL

| **Characteristics** | **Intellectual** | | **Emotional** | | **Behavioural** | | **Communication Skills** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age Interval | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | |
| 17-20 | 50,6±5,1 | | 48,2±6,4 | | 53,1±5,6 | | 151,9±11,1 | |
| 20-23 | 51,1±4,8 | F=0,91 | 48,7±5,1 | F=0,87 | 52,2±7,8 | F=0,93 | 152,0±12,6 | F=0,88 |
| 23-26 | 51,8±5,2 | P=0,78 | 48,3±4,6 | P=0,41 | 53,3±6,2 | P=0,31 | 153,4±10,8 | P=0,48 |
| 26-29 | 51,6±4,9 | | 49,1±5,2 | | 52,8±6,9 | | 153,5±11,8 | |
| 29-… | 50,9±6,5 | | 48,2±5,4 | | 53,2±5,2 | | 152,3±11,6 | |
| Gender | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | |
| Male | 51,9±6,8 | t=0,90 | 49,3±5,7 | t=0,31 | 53,2±5,5 | t=0,59 | 154,4±12,3 | t=0,485 |
| Female | 51,3±7,2 | p=0,45 | 48,8±7,6 | p=0,16 | 53,4±5,9 | p=0,18 | 153,5±12,5 | p=0,38 |
| Education Status | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | | X±SD | |
| Medical Vocational School | 51,1±6,1 | t=0,11 | 48,9±5,1 | t=0,30 | 53,2±4,1 | t=0,13 | 154,2±10,3 | t=0,57 |
| Other | 51,9±4,2 | p=0,24 | 48,6±6,4 | p=0,25 | 53,6±4,8 | p=0,43 | 154,4±11,2 | p=0,41 |

TABLE 2.1
VARIANCE ANALYSIS APPLIED TO CSI INTELLECTUAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS SUBSCALE SCORES

| Source | Mean Square | Standard Deviation | Variance | P | Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 2530,09 | 12,96 | 167,9616 | 0,902 | |
| B | 1648,36 | 12,03 | 144,7209 | 0,452 | |
| C | 610,09 | 98,24 | 9651,098 | 0,316 | |
| AB | 2408,8464 | 11,55 | 133,4025 | 0,163 | 0,919 |
| AC | 1620,8676 | 15,11 | 228,3121 | 0,597 | |
| BC | 1220,1049 | 13,41 | 179,8281 | 0,181 | |
| ABC | 1687,5664 | 15,18 | 230,4324 | 0,485 | |

TABLE 2.2
VARIANCE ANALYSIS APPLIED TO SUB-SCALE POINTS OF EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF IBE

| Source | Mean Square | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| A | 2367,7956 | 13,69 |
| B | 2274,3361 | 7,08 |
| C | 946,1776 | 13,45 |
| AB | 2292,4944 | 12,35 |
| AC | 1707,3424 | 15,23 |
| BC | 1287,3744 | 14,13 |
| ABC | 1830,1284 | 15,56 |

TABLE 2.3
VARIANCE ANALYSIS APPLIED TO SUB-SCALE POINTS OF BEHAVIORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF IBE

| Source | Mean Square | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| A | 2655,3409 | 11,98 |
| B | 1900,96 | 9,81 |
| C | 850,3056 | 11,65 |
| AB | 2389,2544 | 11,81 |
| AC | 1685,1025 | 15,19 |
| BC | 1153,9609 | 12,93 |
| ABC | 1693,3225 | 15,68 |

A: Gender (Female/Male)

B: Age Interval (17-20/20-23/23-26/26-29/29-…)

C: Graduation (Health Vocation High School /Other)

## IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In vocational education, students receive social lessons along with vocational lessons. Healthcare Communications is one of these. The purpose of healthcare communications is to teach the students a good communication model, coupled with communication methods necessary to prevent possible conflicts. By taking this lesson, the students may learn the term Healthcare Communications; make their surroundings understand the ever-increasing importance of healthcare communications, and assess the current situations within scope of communication principles.

Efficient communication among healthcare staff members is very important. If they have efficient communication skills, they will be able to share adequate information in timely manner in teamwork and collaboration. Lack of efficient communication may jeopardize patient care and result in communication-related conflicts between the personnel.[5]

With regard the communication skills of our students according to the high schools they graduated from, our study revealed that the general communication skill levels of students who had graduated from other vocational high schools was higher than the group that had graduated from a medical vocational high school, and that the difference

between them was statistically significant. Accordingly, it is understood that graduates of medical vocational high schools have a weaker standing in healthcare communications compared to other high school groups.

The variance analysis applied to the scores of CSI intellectual communication skills showed that the basic and common factors are insignificant. This shows that there is no significant difference in terms of emotional communication skills between male and female students who take Healthcare Communications lessons at Okan University.

Analyzing the current environment and situation in our country, it can be seen that the problems are caused by lack of communication.

Since communication cannot be considered as a one-directional process, studies on interpersonal communication must be carried out in collaboration with various professional groups in order to identify the difficulties faced by VSHS students in terms of communication, and to improve the communication skills of students who will provide healthcare services for patients and families.[6]

Communication skills are of particular importance for VSHS students, since they will have to be in continuous communication with patients and their relatives.

When we look at university education in our country, it can be seen that there is a deficiency in communications and healthcare communications lessons in the fields of Health Sciences, medicine, and healthcare services. In addition, it is noted that the lessons available are not managed in a professional manner.

It is required that the universities, in collaboration with and with the support of non-governmental organizations and the public, make efforts to make the topic of Healthcare Communications a widespread component of curricula, and that furthermore this topic is reinforced with other lessons of communication such as interpersonal communication etc.

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**Ozgur Ince** is a Lecturer of Healthcare Management Department at Okan University, İstanbul. He was born on 12th February 1989 in Giresun, Turkey. He graduated Healthcare Management department from Kirirkkale University in 2013 and he will complete an Master's Deegre in Industrial Engineering next summer.

Nowadays, he is lecturing on health care institutions management in Vocational School of Healthcare Services (VSHS), Okan University. His scientific interests include: healthcare management, multi-criteria decision-making, scheduling and artificial neural networks.

**Halil SOYAL** was born in 1985 in Muğla, After he had been graduated from Milas high school, he graduated form Eagen University Department of Physics in 2009. His master's degree was completed in Molecular Physics department. He had started his career with an opration officer in Celebi Avation Handling and 5 year working on this mission. After been serving as a Lecturer at Okan University and since 2013, he continues in this task.

**Onur YARAR**, Ankara, 1972 BSc, Istanbul University, Dentistry, 1994, Istanbul. MHA, Istanbul University, Master of Hospital Administrator, 1999, Istanbul. PhD, Istanbul University, Organizational Management, 2008, Istanbul. After his graduation he started to work for Istanbul University as a research assistant for 3 years. Then, he started to work for Planet informatics Company for general manager assistant position. Currently, he is working at Okan University as the director of Vocational School of Health Services.