UNIT 9 INTERPERSONAL ISSUES, COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- appreciate the importance of interpersonal issues involved at work,
- understand the impact of personality differences on interpersonal relationships,
- be more aware and understanding of others behaviour to get along better with people with different interpersonal styles,
- understand importance of interpersonal communication and avoid barriers,
- actively listen and obtain feedback to understand others and to build rapport,
- read nonverbal signals to improve communication,
- identify factors that contribute to conflict to enhance interpersonal relations.

Structure

- 9.1 Interpersonal Relations
- 9.2 Factors Affecting Interpersonal Relations
- 9.3 Towards Enhanced Interpersonal Relations
- 9.4 Communication
- 9.5 Barriers to Communications
- 9.6 Effective Communication
- 9.7 Interpersonal Conflicts
- 9.8 Summary
- 9.9 Self-Assessment Questions
- 9.10 Further Readings

9.1 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Performance of members of any organization depends on their ability to effectively interact with their superiors, subordinates and coworkers within the organization and consumers, suppliers and general public outside. Interpersonal relations, therefore is a very important issue involving any organization? Most organizations have people problems rather than business problems. People problems are due to faulty interpersonal relations, which hinders the attainment of organizational goal. Efforts are therefore made to enhance the interpersonal skills of the people at work.

9.2 FACTORS AFFECTING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Based on past experience people make assumptions about the nature of the other and of the particular kind of situation they are in (e.g. Competition or Cooperation). Each person develops positive or negative feelings that contribute

to enhanced or diminished perceptions of self, the other and the current situation. These perceptions contribute to evaluation of the other person in this situation and lead to the formulation of intentions to interact in specific ways to accomplish personal objectives. The consequences of that behaviour and subsequent interactions generate new inputs for another set of reactions.

Personality Factors

When trying to understand your feelings and behaviour, it helps to be aware that how you think and feel about yourself and others may be very unlike how they think and feel about themselves and you. These different evaluation and reactions depend on each individual's self-concepts, value system; frame of reference, defensiveness, interpersonal relationship needs and feelings.

- (i) Self-Concept: Self-concept is a reflection of all the past experiences one has with others and includes characteristics which differentiates from others. Once self-concept is established and certain specific patterns of behaviour are adopted, it tends to resist change. In order to maintain interpersonal environment and to maximize congruence of harmony, certain mechanisms are used.
- 1. Misperception: Misperceiving how others look at you.
- 2. Selective Interaction: Interact with those persons who can establish a congruent state
- 3. Selective Evaluation of the other person
- 4. Selective Evaluation of self
- 5. Response Evocation: Behave in a way that results in others behaving towards you in an amicable manner.
- (ii) Personal Frame of Reference: Self Concept and perception of other people and things develop into a personal frame of reference for perceiving and interpreting experiences. Two people with different frames of reference may do very different things in the same situation to try and satisfy the same need. Different needs, past experience and cultural backgrounds are a frequent source of different frames of reference. In the present business scenario where people from different culture most often work together in the same organization frame of reference enjoys a lot of importance. To understand others, one needs to understand their frames of reference without judging them in terms of one's own values.
- (iii) Defensiveness: Defense is a cognitive distortion that projects the self-concept against being diminished. It occurs when one protects him or her by denying, excusing or rationalizing one's action to protect self-concept against the threat of being damaged by failure, guilt shame or fear. Defense mechanisms affect the way individuals relate to each other and the way they understand and adopt to their relationships. Defensiveness may distort ideas, obscure solutions and hinder interpersonal relations. One way to avoid defensive behaviour is to acknowledge what is being said as at least partially true.

List of Common Defense Mechanism

Defense	Psychological Process		
Rationalization	Justifying behaviours and feelings that are undesirable by providing explanations that make them acceptable.		
Repression	"Forgetting" painful and frustrating events by unconsciously putting them out of your memory.		
Reaction-Formation	Repressing unacceptable urges and exhibiting the opposite attitudes and behaviours.		
Projection	Protecting yourself from awareness of your own undesirable traits or feelings by attributing them to others.		
Regression	Regression Responding to frustration by reverting to earlier and less mature forms of behaviours; attempting to go back to a more comfortable time.		
Displacement	Redirecting pent-up emotions toward persons other than the primary source of the emotion.		
Compensation	Engaging in a substitute behaviour to make up for a feeling of inadequacy.		
Denial	Refusing to absorb threatening information.		
Withdrawal	Physically or mentally leaving a situation that produces anxiety, conflict, or frustration.		
Resignation	Withholding any sense of emotional or personal involvement in an unpleasant situation.		
Counter dependence	Suppressing feelings of dependence and expressing hostile independence.		
Aggression	Instigating a hostile attack on another because you are frustrated or uncomfortable.		

(iv) **Interpersonal Relation Needs:** People have three nominal interpersonal heads:

Inclusion: Inclusion is the need to establish and maintain relationships with other people. It concerns balancing the desire to be part of a group against the desire for solitude.

Control: Control is the need to maintain a satisfactory balance of power and influence in relationship. It concern trade-offs between the desires for structure and authority versus the desire for freedom.

Affection: Affection is the need to form close and personal relationships with others. It concerns balancing desires for warmth and commitment against those for maintaining distance and independence. Each of these three needs has two sub dimensions - the expressed towards others and wanted from others.

Behaviours Expressed
towards others
wanted from
others

Inclusion Control		Affection	
I want others to join me	I take charge and influence others	I get close to others	
I want others to include me	I want other to lead me	I want others to get close to me	

Figure 1: Interpersonal Relationship Orientations

If you have strong interpersonal needs you desire to interact with others are of gregarious nature. If you have low interpersonal needs you do not mind being alone and are more reserved. It has implication on ones interpersonal relation and also in career choice. Marketing and Human Resource majors need to have stronger interpersonal needs than those in accounting and system analysis.

The degree of need compatibility between two or more people can Make the difference between a happy and productive team and a dissatisfied and ineffective one. If one person has a high need to control and another has a high need to receive direction, they are likely to get along well. On the other hand, if they both have high needs to express control and low need to receive it, conflict is likely to occur. Awareness of difference in interpersonal needs can help you adopt your own behaviour to let other satisfy their needs, which can enhance your relationship with them.

(v) Feelings: How one expresses ones feelings is a frequent source of difficulty in interpersonal relationships. Rather than express them constructively, people often deny or ignore their own and others' feelings in an attempt to avoid rejection or struggle for control. It is the negative reaction that can cause the most problems especially if they are directed at a person one is interacting with far a long time like ones boss or a coworker. Maintaining a productive relationship requires that first you look at yourself to understand what it is about you that is carrying the negative feelings. You may then see that it is not really the other person you do not like, but a particular characteristic that you also have yourself. Then you may be able to overlook the characteristic in the others, as you do in yourself. If self analysis is not enough, it can be helpful to tactfully express personal feelings so that you and the other party can try to workout potential difficulties in a productive way.

Interaction Setting

Often, what appears to be personality changes may just be two peoples' varying responses to difference and incompatible job requirements. This frequently happens when people work in different parts of the organization, under different organizational cultures, for different bosses and in different jobs that make different demands.

(i) Job Requirements: Job requirements determine how psychologically close or distant two people need to be to perform their work. The depth of interpersonal relationships required by a job depends on how complex the task is, whether the people involved possess different kinds of expertise, the frequency of interaction in the job, and the degree of certainty with which job outcomes can be predicted.

Work situations that are simple and familiar to both workers, don't require strong feelings, demand little interaction, and have a high certainty of outcomes call for minimal task relationships. Complex situations that require different knowledge from each person, high trust, much interaction, and have an uncertain outcome call for more interpersonal relationships.

(ii) Organisational Culture: The organization's culture influences the general nature of employee relationships. People take cues from the culture they work in and usually respond to what they perceive as general expectations. Some cultures discourage intimacy and only allow distant, impersonal relationships. The more culture fosters competitiveness, aggressiveness, and hostility, the greater the likelihood people will be cautious and on guard with each other. Other cultures encourage family-like closeness. The more sociable and personal the culture, the more people are likely to share non-work information and feelings. Four primary factors decide the interaction pattern:

Openness: Is the degree to which participants share their thoughts and feelings with others.

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Trust: Trust is the degree that you believe someone else is honest and supportive.

Owning: Owning refers to taking responsibility for a problem to which you are a contributor versus blaming someone else.

Risk to experiment: Risk to experiment is the degree to which you are punished for trying something new, especially if it fails, versus doing things in safe, approved-of ways.

(iii) Trust Level: Relationships do not grow and develop until individuals trust each other. Trust is learned from past interactions with another. Trust is developed as the parties self-disclose personal information and learn that they will not be hurt by making themselves vulnerable to each other. Increased trust leads to the sharing of more personal information between the parties, which enhances regenerative interaction patterns and contributes to improved problem solving and productivity.

In his best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly effective People*, Stephen Covey uses the metaphor of an "emotional bank account" to describe the amount of trust that has been built up in a relationship. To covey, trust refers to the overall feeling of safeness that you have with another person. You make "deposits" into an emotional bank account with another person through kindness, honesty, and keeping commitments. These acts build up a reserve trust account that promotes confidence in you even if your communication is sometimes ambiguous or you make an occasional mistake. But, if you show disrespect, fail to honour commitments, or take advantage of the other person, your trust account becomes depleted. The relationship then becomes degenerative, with hostility and defensiveness making it difficult to build up trust again.

9.3 TOWARDS ENHANCED INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

When interacting with others, sometimes you get the reactions you want, but other times you don't. Your interpersonal effectiveness is the degree to which the consequences of your behaviour match your intentions. You can improve interpersonal effectiveness by disclosing your intentions, receiving feedback on your behaviour, and modifying your behaviour until it has the consequences you intend it to have.

The Johari Window: The Johari Window is a model of the different degrees of openness between two people. It is based on the degree of self-disclosure and solicitation of feedback when sharing information with another person. Tile model presents four windowpanes of awareness of ourselves and others.

	Known to self	Not known to self	
Known to others	Known area	Blind area	
	Hidden area	Unknown area	

Not known to

others
Figure 2: Johari Window

In *the Open area*, information is disclosed and known by both parties; mutually shared perceptions confirm both parties', frames of reference. In the *hidden area* lie things that you are aware of but do not share because you may be afraid that others will think less of you, use the information to their advantage, or they may

hurt the other's feelings. The *blind area* encompasses certain things about you that are apparent to others but not to yourself, either because no one has ever told you or because you defensively block them out. Blind spots, however, make you less effective in interactions with others. A certain team member may be terrible at running meetings, for example, but may not know it because no one has given her any feedback. Finally, in the *unknown area* lie repressed fears and needs or potential that neither you not the other are aware of.

Different Styles of Self-Disclosure: In important intimate and trusting relationships people self :disclose freely with each other. This is the *transparent style* of interacting illustrated in Figure 2, characterized by the large "open" area. Transparent styles are appropriate for significant relationships in regenerative climates. They would not be appropriate with casual acquaintances, in competitive situations, or where trust and goodwill have not been established.

A person with a relatively large "hidden" area uses an *interviewer style* because this person asks a lot of questions when soliciting feedback but does not self-disclose to others. Consequently, others have a difficult time knowing how the person feels or what she wants. After a while, people can become irritated at continually being asked to open up and share things without any reciprocation from the interviewer. They may become suspicious about how the information will be used, and may begin to shut down on the quantity and quality of information they are willing to share.

People with large "blind" areas give a lot of feedback but solicit very little from others. People with this *bull-in-the-china-shop style* frequently tell others what they think and feel and where they stand on issues, but they are insensitive to feedback from others. Since they do not "hear" what others say to and about them, they do not know what impact their behaviour has on others.

A person with a large "unknown" area does not know much about himself-nor do others. He may be the silent *observer type*, who neither gives nor asks for feedback. This is the turtle, which carries an imaginary shell around him that insulates him from others. People have a hard time knowing where he stands or where they stand with him.

Managing Openness: Because openness is risky-having both potential costs and rewards - it can be difficult to decide how open to be and with whom. Sharing your feelings and needs with others can build strong relationships in which you feel understood and cared for and have your needs satisfied. With the wrong parties, however, your openness could be used against you. With closed behaviour, you don't risk rejection or being taken advantage of, but you incur the cost of not satisfying your needs and goals. It is difficult to establish meaningful relationships if you don't let yourself be known to others. Both too much or too little openness can be dysfunctional in different types of interpersonal relationships.

Managing your openness means choosing when and how to be more open and authentic in your relationships with others. It means thinking before acting. In choosing how open to be in any situation, consider your own motives, the probable effects of your remarks on the other, and the recipient's readiness to hear your views. This includes an assessment of the degree of trust between you to determine if self-disclosure would be too risky. In mature relationships, for example, the bonds of trust between parties cause them to assume that the other will not use disclosed personal information in ways that risk negative consequences.

Transactional Analysis: One useful conceptual framework to understand an individual's style is that of Transactional Analysis. Two basic concepts need to be considered interpersonal styles: the *ego states* and the *life positions*.

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Each person involved in transaction with others has three ego states

- a) **The parent,** performing two functions regulating behaviour through prescriptions and sanctions; and through providing support. A parent can be regulating or nurturing.
- b) **The adult,** performing the function of collection and processing of information like a computer.
- c) **The child,** with several functions, mainly: adaptation or sulking; creativity, curiosity and fun; and rebellion. A child can be adaptive, reactive and creative.

Each ego state has its own importance. However, the functional of dysfunctional roles of these ego states depend on the general life position a person takes. T.A.Harris has conceptualized four life positions which are quite popular; I'm OK, you're OK; I'm Not OK, you're Not OK; and I'm Not Not OK; you're not Not OK. M. James has suggested that in general, OK-ness and non-OK-ness can be used as two contrasting ways to understand how people behave. Some others have used the terms "approach" and "avoidance" or "functional" and "dysfunctional". One can take the framework of the four life positions, and work out details of the interpersonal styles. Figure 3 gives the life positions and general styles.

A	D
Avoidant	Different
В	С
Bossing	Competent
	Confident
	Confronting
	Creation
Not OK	OK

Figure 3: General Interpersonal Styles in Four Life Positions

A: Avoidant (or I'm Not OK You're Not OK)

In this life position the person has respect neither for himself nor for others. It seems meaningless to the person to do anything worthwhile. The following styles are likely to be shown with the dominance of various ego states:

B: Bossing (or (I'm OK You're not OK)

Generally, a person in this life position takes a "holier than thou" attitude. This is reflected in an attitude of superiority.

C: I'm OK You're OK

Persons in this life position are creative, confident of themselves, and competent, they have respect for themselves as well as for others.

D: Diffident (or I'm not OK You're OK)

The general attitude in this style is to depreciate oneself. As the person does not have much trust in his own ability he may not assert himself.

If two general life positions (OK and Not OK) are combined with the six ego state dimensions we get 12 interpersonal styles.



Ego State	Avoidance Not OK Dysfunctional	Approach OK Functional	
Nurturing Parent	Rescuing	Supportive	
Regulating Parent	Prescriptive	Normative	
Adult	Task-Obsessive	Problem Solving	
Adaptive Child	Sulking	Resilient	
Creative Child	Bohemian	Innovative	
Reactive Child	Aggressive	Confronting	

Figure 4: Twelve Influencing Styles in Two Life Positions

If four life positions (I'm not OK, You're not OK: I'm OK, You're not OK: I'm OK, You're OK and I'm not OK, You're OK) are combined with six ego stage dimensions we get 24 different styles.

		A	В	C	D
		Pin not OK	I'm OK	I'm OK	I'm not OK
			You' not OK	You're OK	You're OK
Parent	Regulating	You're not OK	Prescriptive	Normative	Indifferent
Adult	Nurturing	Traditional	Patronising	Supportive	Ingratiating
Child	Adaptive	Overindulgent	Task-Obsession	Problem	Overwhelmin
	Reactive	Cynical		loving	Dependent
	Creative	Adaptive	Complaining		Intropunitive
		Withdrawn	Aggressive	Loving	Satirical
		Humorous	Bohemian	Resilient	
				Confronting	
				Innovative	

Figure 5: Elaborate Influencing Styles Life Positions

Sensitivity Training

Interpersonal friction is common among people in organizations. Such frictions stem from different sources. Often, individuals seek contrasting goals, and so come into direct conflict with one another. Similarly, employees may possess such different personalities or attitudes that a degree of mutual irritation is almost guaranteed. Perhaps the single most common cause of interpersonal friction within organization, involves the absence of accurate perception. Frequently, individuals lack insight into their own feelings and into those of the persons around them, and - most importantly-do not comprehend their own impact on others. As a result they anger, irritate, or annoy these persons unintentionally, and often unnecessarily. Sensitivity training is one technique where attempt is made to resolve interpersonal friction.

Advocates of sensitivity training generally accept three basic assumptions: (1) under ordinary conditions, individuals are far from open and honest with one another; (2) this lack of openness often blocks the development of important insights about oneself and others; (3) such insights can be encouraged if individuals are placed in a setting where honest, direct communication is the rule rather than the exception. In accordance with these assertions, sensitivity training itself usually involves the participation of small number of persons (about ten to fifteen) in extended group discussions. These discussions take place in a setting geographically removed from the pressures and distractions of the home organization and often last for Several days. An expert trainer is present at all times, but he or she doe not actually direct the group. Rather, participants are actively encouraged to discuss anything they wish. It is emphasised, however, that the major purpose is to attain greater understanding of oneself and others. In some cases, all the participants are members of the same work unit and are

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acquainted before the start of the same work unit and are acquainted before the start of training (family groups); in others, they belong to the same organization but do not work together (cousin groups); and in still others, participants are totally unacquainted before starting the group sessions-they may even work for different companies (strangers groups). Regardless of the composition of the group, two features remain constant. First, great stress is placed on openness; participants are encouraged to express their feelings directly and openly. Second, immediate feedback is provided. Whenever an individual expresses some feeling or reaction, other group members are encouraged to respond with their own comments and interpretations. It is reasoned that under these conditions, individuals will learn much about themselves and others. And in this way, perhaps, they will become more skilled or adapt at handling interpersonal relations.

After people participate in sensitivity training, they return to their organizations. If the training has been successful they now have clearer understanding of their own feelings, and have learned how to "read" those of others more effectively. Further, they now have a firmer grasp of their own impact upon others-how their behaviours is interpreted by and affects the persons around them. Together, these new insights and skills may contribute to improved interpersonal relations.

9.4 COMMUNICATION

Communication begins when one person sends a message to another with the intent of evoking a response. Effective communication occurs when the receiver interprets the message exactly as the sender intended.

Effective communication is essential for the functioning of any organization. Managers need to transmit orders and policies, build cooperation and team spirit, and identify problems and their solutions. Employees need to clarify directives, provide feedback, and make their problems known. Team members need to share feelings and perceptions to solve problems and resolve conflicts. Communication breakdowns contribute to a host of organizational problems, from failure to carry out simple directives properly to low productivity and quality. Communication in organizations serves three major purposes. It allows members to coordinate actions, share information, and satisfy social needs.

9.4.1 The Communication Process

The main components communication are the sender, the receiver, the message and the channel. The communication process includes the sequential steps of encoding, transmission and decoding.

Encoding: The **sender** desires to communicate to the **receiver** some idea, feeling, or intention. **Encoding** is translating the information into a format that will get the idea across. The result is the **message,** which now is ready for **transmission** to one or more of the receiver's senses through speaking writing, gesturing, or touching.

Transmission Channels: The **channel** is the medium through which the message is transmitted. Oral/verbal communication takes place in speeches, meetings, phone calls, or informal discussions. Nonverbal communication is the communication without words. They take place through touch, tone of voice, facial expression or gestures. They can carry meanings that mere words are not capable of communicating.



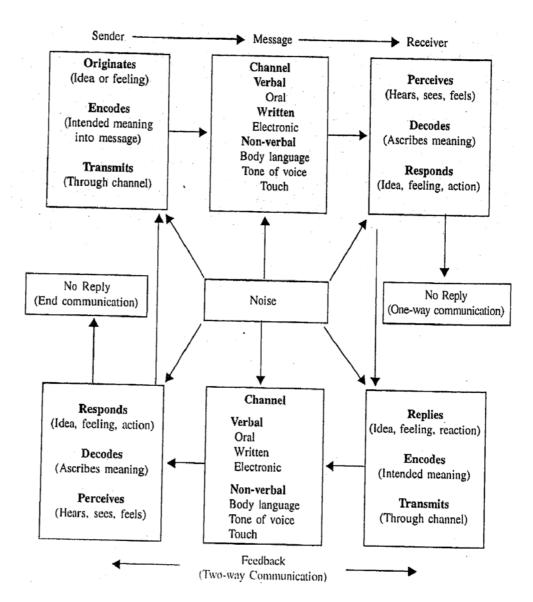


Figure 6: Interpersonal Communication Process

On-line technology can improve communication efficiency and result in better productivity. But, minimizing face-to-face contact and opportunities for soliciting feedback can lead to misunderstandings and lack of nonverbal support, which are often the keys to effective communication and motivation.

Decoding: Communication does not take place if the receiver's senses fail to perceive the sender's message. Decoding is the receiver function of perceiving communication stimuli and interpreting their meaning. It encompasses both comprehending the content of the message and determining the sender's intention in transmitting it. The closer the receiver's decoding to the sender's intended message, the more effective the communication has been.

After the message has been decoded into information meaningful to the receiver, how the receiver feels about and responds to the message will depend on the receiver's needs. No matter how clearly information has been encoded, misunderstanding is always possible in its decoding because this process is influenced by the receiver's past experience, personal interpretations, and expectations.

Noise: Noise is anything that interferes, at any stage, with the communication process.

The success of the communications process depends to a large degree on overcoming various sources of noise.

Feedback

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After the sender, or source, has encoded and transmitted the message and the receiver has received and decoded it, the feelings, ideas, and intentions generated in the receiver are usually communicated back to the sender. In this reversal, the receiver now becomes the responder and the original sender becomes the receiver, and the process continues. An important component of the second stage of the communications process is feedback. Feedback is the message that tells the original sender how clearly his or her message was understood and what effect it has had on the receiver. Feedback is the manager's primary tool for determining whether or not instructions have been understood and accepted. It can be transmitted through a variety of formal and informal organizational communication channels.

9.4.2 How are Communication Channels Used in Organizations?

Communication between organizational members can be vertical or lateral, formal or informal.

Formal Communication Channels

Formal communication channels are established within the organization's chain of command in order to accomplish task objectives.

Downward Communication: Downward communication is used by managers to assign goals; provide job instructions; inform about policies, procedures, and practices; provide performance feedback; point out problems. Downward communication can take many forms; speeches, memos, company newsletters, bulletin boards and policy and procedure manuals.

Upward Communication: Upward communication provides managers with information about current problems, updates on employees' progress toward goals, suggestions for improvement, proposals for innovations, employee grievances, and feedback about employee attitudes. Upward communication can take the forms of employee surveys, suggestion boxes, face-to-face encounters, open-door policies, or required reports.

Horizontal Communication: Horizontal communication takes place among peers and can cut across departments and work groups. These lateral communications benefit the organization by more efficiently providing support, coordination, and information than could vertical channels. Some organizations form task forces and committees to facilitate information exchange and coordination between departments.

Informal Communication Channels

Informal communication channels exist to serve the interests of those people who make them up, regardless of their positions in the organization. They are not formally sanctioned by management and do not follow the organization's hierarchy; however, informal communications are often perceived by employees as more believable than communications received through formal organizational channels. Some typical informal channels are the grapevine, social gatherings, informal one-to-one discussions, and small-group networks.

The Grapevine: The grapevine is the informal communication channel for gossip and rumours and is not controlled by management. The grapevine satisfies social needs, helps clarify orders and decisions, and serves as a way of getting out information that can't be expressed adequately through formal channels.



9.4.3 Communication Networks

Pattern and direction of communication flows have important consequences for both task accomplishment and personal satisfaction. The chain network typifies the organization with a strong, vertical hierarchy, where information travels only upward and downward. People communicate only with their immediate superior and subordinate. It also exists between people working on a production line. In the circle network, people can only communicate to others on either side. This pattern often occurs between people in departments at the same horizontal level in organizations. The star configuration distributes the flow of communication most evenly. It prevails in informal groups with no assigned leader or tasks to accomplish. The wheel represents the other extreme, where all communications are channelled through a central position.

The effectiveness of the communication networks varies according to the task. The centralised wheel-type formation provides more efficient and accurate problem solving of simple and routine tasks. For ambiguous and complex problems, however, the more egalitarian star network is much more effective. Overall group satisfaction is greater in the more egalitarian star networks because group members participate more evenly. In centralized wheel networks, individuals holding the central position are much more active, satisfied, and likely to become leaders than those in peripheral locations.

9.5 BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

The image and credibility of the sender, stereotyping, past experiences, overexposure to data, attitudes, mindsets, perceptual filters, trust and empathy all impact on what receivers receive and how they interpret its meaning. These communication barriers occur in everyday business communications.

Misinterpretation occurs when the receiver understands the message to his or her own satisfaction but not in the sense that the sender intended. Misinterpretation can be a consequence of sender or channel noise, poor listening habits, erroneous inferences on the part of the receiver, or differing frames of reference. An example of this occurs when unclear instructions lead employees to "hear" the wrong procedures for doing their work.

(i) Frames of Reference: A combination of past experience and current expectations often leads two people to perceive the same communication differently. Although each hears the actual words accurately, s/he may catalogue those words according to his or her individual perceptions, or frames of reference (also discussed earlier in this unit).

Within organizations, people with different functions often have different frames of reference. Marketing people may interpret things one-way and production people another. An engineer's interpretation is likely to differ from that of an accountant.

- (ii) Semantics: Just as individual frames of reference lend different meanings to identical words or expressions, SO can variations in group semantics. Semantics pertains to the meaning and use of words. This is especially true when people from different cultures are trying to communicate.
- (iii) Value Judgements: Value judgements are a source of noise when a receiver evaluates the worth of a sender's message before the sender has finished transmitting it. Often such value judgements are based on the receiver's previous experience either with the sender or with similar types of communications.

(iv) Selective Listening: Value judgements, needs, and expectations cause us to hear what we want to hear. When a message conflicts with what a receiver believes or expects, **selective listening** may cause the receiver to block out the information or distort it to match preconceived notions. For example feedback to an employee about poor performance, may not be "heard" because it doesn't fit the employee's self-concept or expectations.

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At times people become so absorbed in their tasks that when someone initiates conversation, they are not able to disassociate and listen effectively. Not only as it difficult for": preoccupied person to receive the message the sender intends, but obvious body language may make it appear that the receiver doesn't care about the sender, or the message. This can create negative feelings and make future communications even more difficult.

- (v) Filtering: Filtering is selective listening in reverse; in fact, we might call it "selective sending." When senders convey only certain parts of the relevant information to receivers, they are said to be filtering their message. Filtering often occurs in upward communication when subordinates suppress negative information and relay only the data that will be perceived by superiors as positive. Filtering is very common when people are being evaluated for promotions, salary increases, or performance appraisals.
- (vi) Distrust: A lack of trust on the part of either communicator is likely to evoke one or more of the barriers we've just examined. Senders may filter out important information if they distrust receivers, and receivers may form value judgements, make inferences, and listen only selectively to distrusted senders. Poorly developed communication leads to distrust one another. Distrust is sometimes caused by status difference.

9.6 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication requires considerable skill in both sending and receiving information.

- (i) Clarity of Messages: A sender can take the initiative in eliminating communication barriers by making sure a message is clear and credible and that feedback is obtained from the receiver to ensure that understanding is adequate.
- (ii) Develop Credibility: The credibility of a sender is probably the single most important element in effective interpersonal communications. Sender's credibility is reflected in the receiver's belief that the, sender is trustworthy.
- (iii) Feedback: Effectiveness of communication depends on feedback. Feedback can be used to clarify needs and reduce misunderstanding to improve relationships and keep both parties updated, to determine which issues need. further discussion, and to confirm all uncertain verbal, vocal, and visual cues. The proper and effective use of feedback skills can lead to mutual understanding, less interpersonal tension, increased trust and credibility, and higher productivity.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving Feedback

- 1. Make sure your comments are intended to help the recipient;
- 2. Speak directly and with feeling based on trust;

- 3. Don't be threatening or judgemental;
- 4. Be specific, not general (use clear and recent examples);
- 5. Give feedback when the recipient is open to accepting it;
- 6. Include only things the receiver can do something about;
- 7. Don't overwhelm; make sure your comments aren't more than the person can handle.

Receiving Feedback

- 1. Don't be defensive;
- 2. Seek specific examples;
- 3. Be sure you understand (summarize);
- 4. Share your feelings about the comments;
- 5. Check out underlying assumptions;
- 6. be sensitive to sender's nonverbal messages;
- 7. Ask questions to clarify.
- (iv) Ask Questions: Questions allow us to gain information about people and problems. They can help us uncover motives and gain insights about another person's frame of reference, goals, and motives. There are three main type of questions: closed-end, open-end, and clarifying.

Closed-end questions require narrow answers to a specific inquiry. Typical answers will be "yes," "no," or something nearly as brief. Open-end questions are often used to draw out a wide range of responses to increase understanding or solve a problem. These questions involve other people by asking or feelings or opinions about a topic. Clarifying questions are essentially restatements of another person's remarks to determine if you have understood exactly what the speaker meant. These questions are useful for clarifying ambiguities and inviting the speaker to expand on ideas and feelings.

(v) Listen: Listening is an intellectual and emotional process in which the receiver integrates physical, emotional, and intellectual inputs in search of meaning. Listening to others is our most important means of gaining the information we need to understand people and assess situations. Many communication problems develop because listening skills are ignored, forgotten, or just taken for granted.

Listening is not the same as hearing, and effective listening is not easy. People usually hear the entire message, but too often its meaning is lost or distorted.

Poor listeners miss important messages and emerging problems. Consequently, the ideas that they propose are often faulty and inappropriate; sometimes they even address the wrong problems. Failure to listen also creates tension and distrust and results *in* reciprocal nonlistening by others. The first step to overcome listening barriers is being aware of them.

Barriers to Effective Listening

Many people identify listening as a passive, compliant act and develop negative attitudes toward it. From early childhood onward, we are encouraged to put out emphasis on speaking as opposed to listening. We are taught that talk is power. When two people are vying for attention and control, however, they not only fail to listen to each other, but also generate increased tension along with decreased trust and productivity.

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To listen well, one has to care about the speaker and the message. Disinterest makes listening effectively very difficult. Differences in prior learning and experience between senders and receivers can also detract from listening ability.

Our beliefs and values also influence how well we listen. If the actual message is in line with what we believe, we tend to listen much more attentively and regard the words in a more favourable light. However, if the message contradicts our current values and beliefs, we tend to criticize the speaker and distort the message.

Skilled listeners attempt to be objective by consciously trying to understand the speaker without letting their personal opinions influence the decoding of the speaker's words. They try to understand what the speaker wants to communicate, not what they want to understand.

Active listening: Active listeners search for the intent and feeling of the message and indicate their understanding both verbally and nonverbally. They practice sensing, attending, and responding. Sensing is the ability to recognize the silent messages that the speaker is sending through nonverbal clues such as vocal intonation, body language, and facial expression. Attending refers to the verbal, vocal, and visual messages that an active listener sends to the speaker to indicate full attention. These include eye contact, open posture, affirmative head nods, and appropriate facial and verbal expressions.

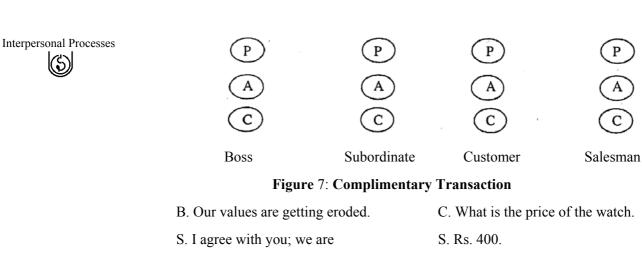
In responding, the active listener summarises and gives feedback on the content and feeling of the sender's message. S/he encourages the speaker to elaborate, makes the speaker feel understood, and attempts to improve the speaker's own understanding of the problems or concerns.

(vi) Nonverbal Communication Cues: The amount of nonverbal feedback exchanged is not as important as how the parties interpret and react to it. Very often a person says one thing but communicates something totally different through vocal intonation and body language. These *mixed signals* force the receiver to choose between the verbal and nonverbal aspects of a message. Most often, the receiver chooses the nonverbal aspect.

Nonverbal communications actually are more reliable than verbal communications when they contradict each other. Consequently, they function as a lie detector to aid a watchful listener in interpreting another's words. Although many people can convincingly misrepresent their emotions in their speech, focused attention on facial and vocal expressions can often detect leakage of the concealed feelings.

(vii) Transactional Analysis: Knowledge and use of the concept of Transactional Analysis (discussed earlier in the unit in determining interpersonal styles) may lead to effective communication.

Any message exchanged between two persons is called transactions. When A sends a message, B receives it; B responds and this is received by A. That is one transaction. A person can send a prescriptive or admonishing message (from what is called the Parent ego state); or an information message (from the Adult ego state); or a feeling message (from the Child ego state). Any of these messages may be sent to (and received by) one of the three ego states of the other person (Parent, Adult, or Child). If the response is by the same ego state as through which the message was received, it is called a complimentary or parallel transaction. Such transactions are very satisfying. These are shown in Figure 7. The response however, may not originate from the ego state which has received the message. Then it is a crossed transaction. Figure 8 give examples of crossed transactions.



P P P P

A A A A

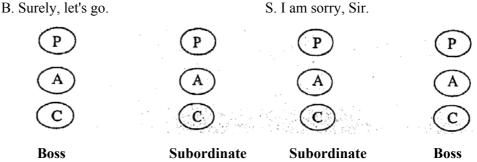
C C C C C

Subordinate Boss Boss Subordinate

B. You are again late.

S. Would you like to go to

the magic show? I have two tickets.



B. Is the report ready?

- S. I want to discuss the resources I shall need to complete the assignment
- S. Do you think I have no other work to do? B. You are always complaining.

Figure 9: Ulterior Transactions

A message sent may not be a simple one. To use Transactional Analysis (TA) terminology a message sent may have two targets (of ego states). There may be an overt message (open and expressed): But it may also contain a covert message (a hidden one). Transactions with such messages are called ulterior transactions. Figure 9 shows these transactions:

In the definition of communication a distraction is made between the transmitted message and the received message. The received message (the interpretation)

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may not be the same as the transmitted message. For example, a message of feelings may be transmitted by an employee when he narrates an experience to his boss, but the latter may receive only the information message, and not the feeling message. Or, a boss may transmit a message of negative feelings (he may receive a message of sarcasm when the boss may actually be expressing appreciation. There is no guarantee that the transmitted and received messages' will be the same. In many cases these turn out to be different, and this distortion causes problems.

Through an enduring exercise in Transactional Analysis one could be made aware of the nature of 'ego states' and its possible impact on developing a designed interpersonal skills in communications. It can be used as a personal growth vehicle for managers to be more effective on the job.

9.7 INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Conflict is one of the inescapable aspects of individual, group or social relations. It develops in situations in which one party perceives that the other party has frustrated his/her major concerns. Conflict, therefore, involves specific perceptions, emotions and behaviour of the persons involved. It is a dispute in which each party expresses hostility towards the other party and intentionally interferes with the other's goal attainment.

Although, conflict is an important feature of human relations, if not attended at the right time may take huge proportions. It has many faces from gentle to harsh, direct to indirect and organised to unorganised.

Generally, conflict is regarded as an evil to be eliminated whenever and wherever possible. But studies show that certain level of conflict is inevitable and desirable. Some amount of conflict is' good for the well being of the individual and the organisation. When conflict exists, free expressions become possible where conflicting viewpoints, may be explored which in turn facilitate improved interpersonal resolution. Moderate level of conflict help people in an organization to realize their own potentialities and limitation, increases their motivation, energy and ingenuity and promote their initiative and innovativeness. Conflicts help to spot light personal, group and organizational problems and deficiencies and to direct efforts toward their societies. Constructively used and held within reasonable limits conflict can create a climate of adaptation, dynamism and creativity. But here it becomes necessary to identify productive and destructive conflict. Often it is seen that initially conflict starts with a positive note but later takes the destructive form.

9.7.1 How Conflict Progressess?

Conflict usually passes through five progressive stages.

- **Stage 1:** At this stage two or more parties need each other to achieve desired objectives. It may also occur due to interdependence, goal differences, ambiguity of responsibilities, over allocation of resources, division of property, role overload, role under load etc. Conflict is latent at this stage.
- **State 2 :** Members become aware of a problem. Parties feel the tension and begin to worry about what will happen. However, at this stage no party can comprehend the actual threat. Conflict is perceived at this stage.
- **Stage 3 :** The parties begin to focus on differences of opinion and opposing interests. Internal tensions and frustration begin to crystallise around specific, defined issues. People now begin to build on emotions and commitment to their particular position. What emotions are felt at this stage is important as

negative ones can produce destructive conflict whereas positive may lead to collaborative endeavours. At this stage conflict gets defined whereby alternatives available for later solution may be determined. Conflict is felt at this stage.

Stage 4: Conflict is manifested at this stage when the opposing parties act to achieve their objectives and frustrate the other. Actions of this stage can range from minor disagreeing, questioning and challenging to verbal attacks, threats, ultimatums, physical attacks and even efforts to destroy the other party.

Stage 5: Conflict finds an outcome at this stage. Results of the interaction of the previous stage make conflict outcome functional or dysfunctional for one or both parties bringing in win-lose or lose-lose situation. To make the outcome of conflict positive, it must be recognised early before frustration and other negative sentiments set in.

There are some basic issues that underline conflict such as power, resources, preferences, values, beliefs and the nature and relationship between parties. These alongwith other issues discussed earlier in this unit affect the interpersonal relation and communicating process. Enhanced interpersonals and communication skills can prevent conflict and help in its resolution. (Conflict resolution will be discussed in a different unit). Knowledge of interpersonal issues and the communication process make better managers even if they cannot change others behaviour they can at least change their own behaviour for the organisaiton to move towards fulfilment of its objectives without conflict.

9.8 SUMMARY

Interpersonal skills is of critical importance in achieving organizational objectives and managerial success. The starting point of improving interpersonal relations is to understand ones own self concept, frame of reference, feelings and need compatibility. There are factors other than these (discussed earlier in this unit) that affect interpersonal style and also the way one communicates. In this unit there is discussion on some interpersonal issues and interpersonal communication process and probable causes of conflict which often result due faulty interpersonal relations.

9.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1. What is interpersonal style? Explain the role of personality factors in deciding one style.
- 2. Explain various techniques to improve interpersonal relations in organizations.
- 3. Describe the communication process and identify its key components.
- 4. Explain the role of listening skills in interpersonal communication.
- 5. Why is feedback important? Discuss how feedback may be given and received.
- 6. Conflict can be avoided by effective communication and enhanced interpersonal relations. Comment.

9.10 FURTHER READINGS

Stephens P. Robins, Organisational Behaviour, Prentice Hall, 1996.

Udai Pareek, Conflict and Collaboration in Organisations, Oxford IBH, 1992.