

THE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN YAMETHIN TOWNSHIP

Nyan Lin¹

Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the interpersonal skills of high school students in Yamethin Township and to find out significant difference in their interpersonal skills with respect to the gender, grades, school locations, parental jobs and parental education. In this study, the participants were totally 988 (421 males and 567 females) high school students from selected five high schools in Yamethin Township during 2014-15 academic year. Interpersonal Skills Questionnaires were used as an instrument. It includes twelve categories; namely nonverbal communication, reinforcement, questioning, reflecting, opening and closing, explanation, listening, self-disclosure, influencing, assertiveness, group interaction and leadership. Quantitative research design was used in this study. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistical statistics such as independent samples *t*-test and ANOVA were conducted to analyze the collected data. The participants possessed the moderate level of interpersonal skills. The result of the study also found that there was no significant difference in the interpersonal skills of high school students with respect to their gender, grades and parental jobs. But, significant difference was found in the interpersonal skills of high school students with respect to parental education and school at different locations. Thus, parents play an essential role for the development of interpersonal skills of their children and the parents should make a warm environment which can enhance interpersonal skills level of children to get success in their future lives.

Keywords: Interpersonal Intelligence, Interpersonal Skill, Non-verbal Communication.

Introduction

Interpersonal skill (IPS) is the ease and comfort of communication between individuals and their colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, clients, and other stakeholders (Peled, 2000). Interpersonal skill includes the ability to motivate others, conflict management, effective communication, and team building (Sunindijo & Zou, 2011; Strohmeier, 1992). Moreover, interpersonal skills are essential for maintaining peace and avoiding manners that can cause conflicts. To train students to have good interpersonal skills is one of the aims of education. If the aim of education is to prepare the children for their future, it needs to actively prepare the children for peace. To achieve the aim of education, educators need to provide students with information about issues affecting peace, with educational psychology to cope with this information and the personal resources necessary to live peacefully.

Interpersonal skills are the communication skills that can be seen between people who have some relationships. Therefore, interpersonal communication consists of the interaction between a child and his parent, a supervisor and a candidate, two cousin, two relatives, two

¹ Department of Basic Education, Ministry of Education.

friends, and so on. In spite of being dyadic in nature, interpersonal communication sometimes occurs among small intimate groups such as family. But even within a family, the interpersonal relationships that take place are often dyadic, mother to child, sister to brother, etc. Therefore, interpersonal skills should be learned and studied well.

Studying human's interpersonal skills is a major assistant in the advancement of their learning process as good interpersonal skill can support good learning process. Again, understanding the growth of student's interpersonal skills is essential in the field of education. Besides, interpersonal skill is related with interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is a kind of intelligence that is defined in Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence and it is closely related to theory of mind. Gardner (1992) stated that interpersonal intelligence denotes a person's capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people and consequently to work effectively with others. Shopkeepers, professors, doctors, and monks and actors and all need good interpersonal intelligence.

Interpersonal skills play a crucial role in our daily routines and social interactions both within and beyond traditional work settings. It may be argued that the most pressing social problems are concerned with the relationships between people, and that these are an essential part of human nature (Argyle, 1968; cited in Klein, 2009).

Interpersonal skills are important for personal success and happiness. Interpersonal skills can make and maintain close friends and romantic relationships. Besides, the success of family relationships depends heavily on the interpersonal skills among the family members. Interpersonal skill is also important in problem solving. A person who has the ability in interpersonal skill will be open to the ideas of others and willing to put forward views of his own essential activities in the process of problem solving. So, a person who is good in interpersonal skill will be able to communicate and work with a wide variety of people, negotiate differences, handle conflicts, make requests effectively and receive information objectively.

Therefore, interpersonal skill is the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal, non-verbal messages, and face-to-face communication skill. Studying interpersonal skill of high school students will be valuable for both teachers and students in their teaching-learning process.

Purposes of the Study

The primary purpose of the study is to investigate the interpersonal skills of high school students in Yamethin Township.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To study the differences in interpersonal skills of high school students by gender
2. To analyze whether high school students' interpersonal skills differ by their grades
3. To study the interpersonal skills of high school students according to the locations of schools
4. To examine the interpersonal skills of high school students by their parents' jobs
5. To study the interpersonal skills of high school students by their parental education

Definitions of Key Terms

Interpersonal intelligence. A capacity of a person to comprehend the intentions, motivations, and wishes of other people, and as a consequence, to work better with others.

Interpersonal skills. The skills of nonverbal communication, reinforcement, questioning, reflecting, opening and closing, explanation, listening, self-disclosure, influencing, assertiveness, group-interaction and leadership are called interpersonal skills.

Non-verbal communication: A range of non-verbal signals including facial expression, gaze, gestures, posture, bodily contact, spatial behaviour, clothes and appearance, nonverbal vocalizations and smell.

Related Literature Review

Interpersonal Skills

The ability to communicate effectively is the interpersonal competence or skills. The greater a person's interpersonal skills, the more options a person will have for communicating with friends, lover's family; with colleagues on the job; and in just about any situation in which a person will communicate with another person. The greater the person's skills, the greater the person's power to accomplish successfully what a person wants to accomplish. In short, interpersonal skills includes knowing how interpersonal communication works and how to best achieve a person's purposes by adjusting his messages according to the context of the interaction, the person with whom are being interacted.

To apply interpersonal skills effectively in conversation, a person needs to be mindful of the unique communication situation of a person's available communication options, and of the reasons why one option is likely to be better than the others (Burgoon, Berger, & Waldron, 2000; Elmes & Gemmill, 1990).

In the world, interpersonal skills are thought as a very important human ability for both individual and work place development particularly in the present reality of life. Thus, researchers in many fields of studies have recommended for the necessities to provide the students in high school with this skill. In addition, several departments in business sector in both developed and developing countries in most parts of the world have identified and suggest that the teaching of these important skills should include interpersonal skills by integrating them into their school subjects. Therefore, it is essential for the teachers to ensure the transfer of these skills to the new generations of youth. Thus, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2008) suggested that integrating interpersonal skills into the school subjects can help countries especially the developing nation to build and reinforce their education for the continuously changing world.

Generally, everyone needs to use interpersonal skills in the course of everyday living to be able to acquire the success and happiness of life. The range of what includes interpersonal skills is enormous, as it is earlier stated. They accepted the interpersonal skills as parts of the 21st century life skills for work (Deba, Jabol, Buntat & Hatib Mustamal, 2014). Interpersonal skills are composed of a person's knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to at least six components: (1) being aware of one's own and others' mental situations, (2) managing feelings and behaving appropriately, (3) making communication effectively, (4) building good and meaningful

relationships, (5) cooperating well with others, and (6) solving the problem. Besides, interpersonal skills are the skills that are greatly concerned with the social development. So, social development is one of the factors needs to be considered in the fields of interpersonal skills.

Interpersonal skills are the life skills people apply every day to have communication and interaction with other people, not only individually but also in groups. People who try to develop good interpersonal skills are more successful in both their business and family lives.

Interpersonal Skills Include:

- Verbal Communication
- Non-Verbal Communication
- Listening Skills
- Negotiation
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Assertiveness

Moreover, the persons who are good at interpersonal skills are good at interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is one of the components of Gardner's multiple intelligences. Interpersonal intelligence is the intelligence that operates primarily through person-to-person relationships and communication.

Method

Research Method

In this study, descriptive research design and survey method were used.

Participants of the Study

The target population of the study was the high school students from Yamethin Township and the participants were selected by simple random sampling technique. A total number of 988 high school students (421 males and 567 females) from five high schools in Yamethin Township were selected as the participants to respond the questionnaire in order to explore their interpersonal skills. The characteristics of the participants were described in Table 1 in detail.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Participants

	Grade 10		Grade 11		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
School 1	50	58	20	22	150
School 2	37	43	21	24	125
School 3	79	102	47	82	310
School 4	29	30	11	42	112
School 5	49	40	78	124	291
Total	244	273	177	294	988

Research Instrumentation

Based on Interpersonal Skills Model of Hartley (2001), the instrument was developed. The sources of questionnaire were collected and modified from Skills You Need Website. Then, the 60-items questionnaires were constructed based Peter Hartley's Interpersonal Skills Model. It

includes twelve subscales and each subscale was composed of 5 items respectively. Of all the items, 16 items were reverse items. The instrument was scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, indicating a response of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree for positively stated items whereas the scoring was reversed for negatively stated items.

Firstly, the items were translated from English version to Myanmar version. After preparing the questionnaire, expert review was conducted for face validity and content validity by the experts in the field of Education, Educational Psychology and Educational Test and Measurement from Sagaing University of Education and Yangon University of Education. Next, revision in length, word length, and sentence length were carried out with the help of experts' review. Finally, pilot study was done with a sample of 43 Grade 10 students and 46 Grade 11 students to check whether the wording of statements had clarity and was relevant to the Grade 10 and Grade 11 students or not. Based on the pilot result, questionnaire was revised and applied.

From the result of the pilot study, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.797. Thus, this Cronbach's alpha value indicates that this questionnaire has satisfactory reliability to assess high school student's interpersonal skills.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collection was done with the randomly selected 988 high school students in their regular classrooms in four schools and the special hall room in one school by the permission of the headmasters during the second and third weeks of November, 2014. At the time of data collection, the researcher explained the participants about the purpose and the importance of their participation in this study. It was also informed that any collected data from them would be kept in confidence. Then, the questionnaires were distributed and the participants were requested to complete both the participants' demographic factors and the measuring tools without leaving any empty items. The required data such as student's date of birth were asked from the teachers of the concerned schools in Yamethin Township. Then, the collected data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis, independent samples *t*-test and one-way ANOVA with the help of SPSS (version 16).

Results and Findings

Interpersonal Skills of High School Students

The data collected from the survey was analyzed and computed by quantitative methods including both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Specifically, descriptive statistics was computed to identify the mean, standard deviation, frequency, minimum and maximum scores of high school students' interpersonal skills. Independent samples *t*-test was also used to examine whether there was significant difference in interpersonal skills by gender, grade, subject streams and schools at different locations. In addition, one-way ANOVA was conducted to inspect the significant differences between students' interpersonal skills and their ages, parental educational and parental job. The results and interpretation can be seen as follow;

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis for High School Students' Interpersonal Skills

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Nonverbal Communication	18.05	3.090	9	25
Reinforcement	18.84	2.378	9	25
Questioning	17.34	2.523	9	25

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Reflecting	16.10	2.514	8	25
Opening and Closing	16.87	2.545	7	25
Explanation	16.60	2.621	8	24
Listening	18.43	3.353	7	25
Self-disclosure	14.60	2.841	7	25
Influencing	16.79	2.660	7	25
Assertiveness	16.38	2.735	7	25
Group Interaction	17.00	2.905	6	25
Leadership	15.87	2.693	8	25
Interpersonal Skills	202.87	18.903	138	270

Table 1 indicated that the mean score and standard deviation for the whole sample were 202.87 and 18.903. The minimum and maximum scores of interpersonal skills were 138 and 270. The mean score of reinforcement was the highest among the other components of interpersonal skills.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Gender

Descriptive analysis was made to find out gender difference for interpersonal skills of the high school student. Independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results were reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of Independent Samples *t*-test of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Gender

Variable	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Interpersonal Skills	Male	421	201.66	19.24	-1.736	986	.083
	Female	567	203.77	18.61			

According to Table 2, the mean values of interpersonal skills were 201.66 and 203.77 for the male and female students respectively. The results of independent samples *t*-test showed no significant difference in high school students' interpersonal skill by gender.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Grade

Table 3 The Results of Independent Samples *t*-test of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Grade

Variable	Grade	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Interpersonal Skills	Grade 10	517	201.87	17.81	-1.734	986	.083
	Grade 11	471	203.96	19.99			

According to Table 3, the mean score of Grade 10 students did not differ significantly from that of Grade 11 students on interpersonal skills ($p = .083$).

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Location of Schools

The means, standard deviations and independent samples *t*-test were conducted to find out the difference in the interpersonal skills of high school students from urban schools and rural schools and the results were reported in Table 4.

Table 4 Result of Independent Samples *t*-test on High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Location of Schools

Variable	Location of Schools	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
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Interpersonal Skills	Urban	585	204.86	16.71	2.003*	986	.045
	Rural	403	201.37	17.89			

* $p < .05$

Table 4 showed that a significant difference in mean scores at 0.05 level. Hence, high school students from urban schools seemed to possess significantly higher interpersonal skills than those from rural schools.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Job

Descriptive analysis was conducted to know the mean and standard deviation of students' interpersonal skills by father's job.

Table 5 Means and Standard Deviations for High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Job

Variable	Father's Job	N	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Interpersonal Skills	Government's Servant	72	203.25	20.31	138	260
	Seller	36	195.97	22.48	145	240
	Merchant	55	203.45	22.01	143	252
	Farmer	682	203.34	18.33	150	270
	Others	143	201.92	18.48	156	255

Table 5 showed a slight difference in mean scores of high school students' interpersonal skills among the five types of father's job. One-way ANOVA was computed to find more valid evidence in investigating the differences of high school students' interpersonal skills by their father's job.

Table 6 Results of ANOVA for High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Job

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Interpersonal Skills	Between Groups	2025.768	4	506.442	1.420	.225
	Within Groups	350635.127	983	356.699		
	Total	352660.895	987			

Table 6 showed that there was no significant difference of high school students' interpersonal skills in relation to their father's job ($F(4,983) = 1.420, p > .05$). So, it can be obviously identified that father's job has no significant effect on students' interpersonal skills. Similarly, See Sir (2014) found that there was no significant difference among students' social intelligence by fathers' jobs. In contrast, the previous research by Ahmetar (2012) revealed that significant difference was found on students' social skills by their parent's occupation.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Education Level

To know the mean and standard deviation of students' interpersonal skills by father's educational level, descriptive analysis was conducted and the result can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7 Means and Standard Deviations for High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Education

Variable	Father's Education	N	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Interpersonal Skills	Primary	528	202.69	18.60	143	266
	Middle	365	202.19	18.74	145	270

	High	62	205.35	18.70	174	259
	Graduate	31	211.03	21.54	170	255
	Postgraduate	2	170.00	45.26	138	202

Table 7 shows that there were slight differences in high school students' interpersonal skills by their father's educational level. Students whose fathers are graduates possessed the highest mean scores (211.03). Hence, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out and the result can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8 ANOVA Results of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Interpersonal Skills	Between Groups	4795.097	4	1198.774	3.387**	.009
	Within Groups	347865.797	983	353.882		
	Total	352660.895	987			

** $p < .01$

Table 8 showed that there was significant difference of students' interpersonal skills regarded with their father's educational level ($F(4,983) = 3.387, p < .01$). Then, Post Hoc test was consequently carried out by Tukey HSD method and the result can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9 The Result of Tukey HSD for High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Father's Education Level

Variable	Father's Education (I)	Father's Education (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Interpersonal Skills	Graduate	Postgraduate	41.032*	.024

* $p < .05$

Table 9 showed that the mean score of high school students with graduated father were significantly higher than that of students whose father finished postgraduate level with mean difference of 41.032 at 0.05 level.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Job

Descriptive analysis was used to find out the differences of high school students' interpersonal skills by their mother's jobs and the result can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10 Means and Standard Deviations of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Job

Variable	Mother's Job	N	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Interpersonal Skills	Government's Servant	32	209.12	23.45	175	255
	Seller	132	200.14	20.37	138	242
	Merchant	209	202.78	17.24	150	244
	Farmer	574	203.17	18.57	143	270
	Others	41	203.02	22.10	157	247

Table 10 shows that there was a slight difference in high school students' interpersonal skills by mother's job. Students whose mothers are government's servant possessed the highest mean scores (209.12). Then, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to find out whether high school students' interpersonal skills significantly differed by their mother's job. The result can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11 The Result of ANOVA of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Job

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Interpersonal Skills	Between Groups	2285.566	4	571.391	1.603	.171
	Within Groups	350375.329	983	356.435		
	Total	352660.895	987			

Table 11 showed that there was no significant difference in high school students' interpersonal skills by their mother's job ($F(4, 983) = 1.603, p > 0.05$). Similarly, the previous research found that significant difference does not exist among the social intelligence of students with their mother's jobs (See Sir, 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that mother's job cannot have significant influence on high school student's interpersonal skills.

Comparison of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Education Level

Descriptive analysis was conducted to find out the mean and standard deviation differences in high school students' interpersonal skills by their mother's education level. The result can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12 Means and Standard Deviation of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Education Level

Variable	Mother's Education	N	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Interpersonal Skills	Primary	693	201.59	18.35	143	270
	Middle	226	205.30	19.71	138	260
	High	29	206.86	16.35	183	242
	Graduate	38	207.95	22.34	174	255
	Postgraduate	2	218.00	45.26	186	250

Table 12 showed that high school students whose mother with postgraduate level possessed the highest mean scores (218) among the others. It was also found that students whose mother with primary education level possessed the lowest mean scores (201.59).

Then, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine these mean differences were significant or not and the results can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13 ANOVA Results of High School Students' Interpersonal Skills by Mother's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Interpersonal Skills	Between Groups	4377.870	4	1094.468	3.089*	.015
	Within Groups	348283.024	983	354.306		
	Total	352660.895	987			

Table 13 showed that high school students' interpersonal skills significantly differed mother's education level ($F(4,983) = 3.089, p < 0.05$). Similarly, See Sir (2014) found that there was significant difference among the students' social intelligence according to their mothers' education level. Thus, it can be surely said that mother's education was one of the factors which can influence the interpersonal skills of high school students.

Conclusion

Discussion

It was found that High School students participated in the study were high in interpersonal skill level. There was no gender effect on interpersonal skills. Moreover, there was no grade difference in interpersonal skills. The students from the schools situated in the center and near the town have better interpersonal skills than the students from the schools away from the town and are difficult in communications. It may also be that the students from the urban schools have to make relationships with many kinds of people and friends than the students from the rural schools.

In accordance with the obvious results, it can be said that students' parental jobs cannot affect the interpersonal skills of high school students in the present study. According to the results, it can be said that students whose parents with graduate education level possess the highest interpersonal skills than the postgraduate, high school, middle school and primary school. So, it can be interpreted that graduate parents can give their children much time to train to possess good interpersonal skills than the higher educated parents and lower educated parents.

In this research, it was found that some students are good at some subscales and bad at the others. Specifically, the female students are better than the male students at nonverbal communication, reinforcement, questioning, reflecting, opening and closing and listening but the male students are better at explanation, self-disclosure, influencing, assertiveness, group interaction, leadership. The teachers and parents, the important participants of the education process, should know very well these skills and train the students and children to possess good interpersonal skills in their lives.

Briefly, interpersonal skill is one of the essential skills needed to success in education and workplace, ultimately in the life long process. So, the parents and teachers should be careful the factors which can cause the students' interpersonal skills better or worse and should help them to improve the students' interpersonal skills. It is one the main aims of education process of every country.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a limited geographical scope, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to students in other cultural, social, or economic contexts. Second, as the design was cross-sectional, it does not capture the developmental changes of interpersonal skills over time. Third, much of the data relied on students' self-reports, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and may not accurately reflect their actual behaviors. Additionally, the study focused on a limited set of variables, such as gender, grade, parental education, and school location, while other potentially important factors like personality traits, peer influence, extracurricular participation, or technology use were not examined. Finally, the classification of schools as urban or rural may oversimplify the nuanced differences between communities, as

factors such as school resources, teacher training, and social environments may also contribute to students' interpersonal skill development.

Future research should seek to address these limitations in several ways. Longitudinal studies are needed to better understand how interpersonal skills develop throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Expanding the sample to include students from diverse regions, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds would improve the generalizability of findings. Employing mixed-methods approaches, such as combining surveys with interviews, classroom observations, or teacher evaluations, could provide more comprehensive insights into students' interpersonal competencies. Researchers should also explore additional factors, including peer relationships, extracurricular activities, digital communication habits, and personality traits, to gain a fuller picture of what shapes interpersonal skill development. Moreover, intervention-based studies could test the effectiveness of training programs designed by teachers and parents to strengthen specific subskills. Comparative research across different types of schools and educational systems, both within and across countries, may also shed light on structural and contextual influences on interpersonal skills.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer greatly respectful appreciation to Dr. Khin Hnin Nwe, Professor and Head of the Department of Educational Psychology, Yangon University of Education and Dr. Khin Thuza Saw, Retired Principal and Dr. Myo Ko Aung, Professor and Head of Department of Educational Psychology, Sagaing University of Education for their careful supervision, valuable encouragement and kindness to my study. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the participants for their cooperation in data collection for this study.

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