THE EFFECTS OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS ON COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

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Abstract
Making a smart decision requires effective verbal communication. Communication is crucial in different contexts, particularly in an organization. This is because face-to-face and oral communications are still the gold standards in communication abilities. The drawback is that it is prone to all communication problems, such as miscommunication, communication barriers, and challenges in the respective competencies. Therefore, this study aims to identify these communication behaviors that are learned socially and taken place in a leading cosmetic company in Malaysia. This study is guided by the interpersonal skill model to examine the relationship between verbal communication behaviors and communication competence in the workplace. The objectives of this study are to identify the effects of verbal communication behaviors on communication competencies of these behaviors based on the workplace communication behavior inventory, communication competency instruments measured communication competency. Using a simple random sampling method, 277 usable responses were collected. The information-sharing factor was found to be the most commonly practiced verbal communication behavior subscale. Thus, this paper contributes to the existing literature on interpersonal skill model by showing that the importance of communication competence and its relationship with verbal communication behaviors in the pharmaceutical industry

Keywords: Verbal Communication behaviour, communication competent, pharmaceutical industry

INTRODUCTION
Communication is crucial in different contexts, particularly in a cultural diversity workplace [1]. It enables employees in an organization to interact and work effectively and efficiently. According to [2], the mass usage of new technology in the workplace, global nature of organizing and the changing person-organization relationship also emphasize the importance of communication in the workplace as this contributed to the accomplishments at work. Communication behavior consists of acts, interacts, and double interacts behaviors that work together to achieve conversational goals [3]. Therefore, it is captivating to identify these communication behaviors that are learned socially and taken place in any business organization.

Looking at the importance of communication at work, competency and effectiveness in business communication have been receiving considerable attention from scholars. Numerous studies have conducted on communication competence on human-computer interaction, marketing, gerontology, intuitional aspects, conflicts management [4] and entrepreneurial skills [5]. Communication competence is described as an individual’s capability and willingness to responsibly take part in a transaction to maximize the results of shared meaning [6].

In such a dynamic and fast-moving working environment, it is interesting that most of the daily operational tasks in a leading cosmetic company are based on individuality and human communication. It can be seen clearly that effective communication in the workplace plays a vital role in reaching success in the workplace, and this is depending on the capability of employees’ communication skills.

Several scholars [7], [8], [9], [10], [11] have conducted similar studies on communication competency via cognitive approach, but little has ventured into the behavioral approach. The research identifies such a gap in the knowledge of studying effective communication behavior in the workplace. Does the researcher also wish to determine what exactly the verbal communication behaviors that take place in this company on an everyday basis are? And to what extent are these communication behaviors contributed in terms of the communication competency among the employees in the organization.

In this study, the verbal communication behaviors are categorized into four subcategories based on the workplace communication behavior inventory [11] namely: information sharing that includes persons seek information and can answer questions; relational maintenance that involves persons like to talk and enjoy jokes; expressing negative emotion refers to persons often express their grievances and always complaint; and lastly organizing encompassing persons like to prioritize works and manage others. By breaking down the daily communication behaviors into these four subscales, it will provide a more unobstructed bird eye view on the importance of verbal communication behaviors, and allow the evaluation of the corresponding communication competency. Hence, this study aims at identifying the effects of verbal communication behaviors on communication competencies in a leading cosmetic company.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The term “communication” is originated from the Latin words communicare (meaning to ‘share’ or ‘impart’) and communis (‘share in common’) [12]. In short, communication emphasizes how people utilize messages to create meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media to achieve the primary goal – understanding [13].

Verbal communication refers to the use of sounds and language to relay a message or to express, especially in contrast to using gestures or mannerisms [14]. There are several goals to be achieved in a communication process. Communication goals vary across individuals [13]; it is generally summarized into three
subcategories: self-presentation goal (who we are and how we want to be perceived), relational purpose (how we develop, maintain and terminate relationship) and instrumental goals such as gaining compliance (getting someone to do something for us), getting the information we need, or asking for support [15].

Firstly, the self-presentation goal refers to adapting communication to be perceived in particular ways. Everyone performs different roles in different contexts [16]. This is when companies and celebrities create a public image and present different faces in various settings. Competent communicators can successfully manage how others perceive them by adapting to situations and contexts [17]. For instance, a newly hired employee may initially perform the role of a severe and agreeable co-worker in an organization. A parent may play the role of stern head of household and a culturally aware friend to his or her partner's need first. Secondly, the relational goal is achieved when a positive relationship remains [18]. This is when one partner puts his or her relational partner's needs above his or her own, which will likely make his or her relational partner feel valued. For example, one partner decides to go along with his or her partner's suggestion of going somewhere for dinner. There is a satisfying and complementary relationship when the other partner has or will make similar concessions to put his or her partner's need first. Other routine relational tasks such as celebrating special occasions or honoring accomplishments, spending time together, and checking in regularly by phone, e-mail, text, social media or face-to-face communication. Lastly, instrumental goals are achieved when "things are done". These goals can be long term or day-to-day. For instance, when a person asks his or her friend to help him or her in moving out at the weekend. This is where the person is gaining compliance to "get things done".

One practice several communication behaviors such as verbal communication behaviors, non-verbal gestures, body language and many more to achieve the primary function of a communication process. There are abundant communication studies from past researches. However, the new movement of studying communication via the behavioralism approach from the 1950s has brought new interesting insights in communication studies [19]. Swaying away from the traditional research on speeches and speech-making, these scholars developed their studies based on the behaviors involved in the communication process. From a psychological perspective, verbal communication was first described as a set of actions as they are dependent on reinforcement from past and current environment [20]. To put in another way, verbal behaviors such as speaking, face-to-face discussion and other behaviors that involved spoken words are heavily influenced by the context of the surrounding interactive environment of each individual [19].

Bandura further supported the statement by stating that these verbal communication behaviors are also known as "conditioned response" which is driven by a source of motivation [21]. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something due to its intrinsic satisfaction [22] such as engaging in small talk with friends solely because it is enjoyable. Extrinsic motivation is regarded as conducting a face-to-face meeting to get the work done instead of the pleasure from the nature of the work itself. For communication behaviors in the workplace, employee communication behaviors are mostly driven by their accomplishment at work or their processes in achieving their daily tasks [23]. Employees are expected to communicate effectively across multiple departments that are driven by extrinsic motivations – to get the job done and to get promotions. Moreover, the importance of community relations in practicing the organizational excellent is highly emphasised [24].

According to the social cognitive theory [8], another premise that denotes verbal communication as behavior is that people acquire new behavioral patterns by observing behaviors of others and changing or self-correlating their behaviors once enacted on external feedback or internal self-initiated social advancement. These behaviors can be taught, learned and improved. For instance, people learned to conduct face-to-face discussion and arrive at a consensus understanding after various rounds of conflict management and disagreement. All the verbal behaviors involved in the above process can be learned and improved. The outcome of communication behaviors can be measured in the form of observations (observation of people performing communication behaviors) [25]. In an organizational communication context, communication behaviors are mostly self-evaluated (frequency of certain behaviors practiced). Still, external feedback or internal self-evaluated perceptions can be used by the individual to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of such behaviors, including the respective competency of the behaviors, job satisfaction, and others, often in the job performance review. The goal of communication behaviors in the workplace is to share meaning and accomplish the goals at work. However, it is crucial to determine the effectiveness and efficiency such behaviors, and ultimately to identify the degree of competency of these communication behaviors.

The underlying notion of communication competence is communication effectiveness, which is defined as "a form of interpersonal influence that and individual is faced with the tasks of fulfilling communication goals (effectiveness) while maintaining conversational and interpersonal norms (appropriateness)" [3]. It encompasses task-related components (knowledge and skills) and relational competencies such as interpersonal skills, listening and others [26]. In short, communication competence is the effectiveness of the communication process and is a behavior that can be learned [27]. It has been studied in a diverse array of disciplines such as leadership, business, human-computer interaction, and conflict [28].

There are three major models of studying communication competence. The first is the trait model, which presumes socially competent behaviors are largely regarded as functions of personal disposition [29]. The competencies varied across each individual based on their respective personality dispositions and expressed as communication traits. For example, a person with patience carries empathy and attentiveness as part of his or her communication traits, which distinguish it from an aggressive person. The differences in communication traits result in a varying degree of communication competence.

The second model views communication competency as functional communication [20], at which competence encompasses message production, message processing, interaction coordination, and social perception. In other words, competence is evaluated based on how messages are generated (verbal or non-verbal), and how well the receiving party comprehends the message developed that enable effective interactions and make sense of social reality. An example of this model [9], the call center agent reflected that competency is based on how the agent speaks such as the volume, confidence and so on, instead of behaviors involved (listening, asking questions).

The third model in communication competency is the interpersonal skill model. This model assumes that communication behaviors can be carried out repeatedly as an underlying motor sequence or interpersonal skills [31]; [32]; [18]. In another way of saying, these communication behaviors practiced are learned, investigated, and individuals can choose effective behaviors from alternatives [9]. Essential effective interpersonal communication behaviors consist of listening, cueing and negotiating; where problem-solving, role-taking and information processing skills are effective in fostering social competence [33]; [26]; [34]. This model identified that...
Communication competencies are vital in all mediums [35] and business communication [36]. Due to the nature of the business, specific communication competency varies across this medium. Waldeck and others have identified the specific communication competencies from the business communication perspective in their study in 2012. They have identified six competencies representing a mix of traditional and contemporary communication skills, at which they believed are the most relevant to the communication in the workplace. By conducting an in-depth content analysis on 347 articles from the best-selling popular press and practitioner-oriented business periodicals (HR Magazine, Forbes Magazines and many more), they have identified that the six most essential communication ranked based on their importance: relationship and interpersonal communication (conflict management, small talk, rapport building), mediated communication (online social networking, engaging in online training and learning), intergroup communication (intergenerational communication, intercultural sensitivity), communication of enthusiasm, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit (communicate in a positive attitude, creativity, and motivation), nonverbal communication (time management, proximity, dressing) and speaking and listening (facilitation, public speaking) [25]. The scholars believed that the six competencies should work as a guide of interest for each company, especially in designing effective training courses in fostering these competencies mentioned above.

Workplace Communication Behavior Inventory that is closely related to the communication competency at the workplace is highlighted [11]. In their study, they have identified 163 verbal communication behaviors used in the workplace, at which they have reduced the lists to 33 verbal workplace behaviors composed of four factors: information sharing (explaining, listening, asking questions), relational maintenance (creating small talk, joking), expressing negative emotions (complaining, questioning) and organizing communication behaviors (scheduling, managing others, seeking approval). Hence, a stronger connection between information sharing and organizing communication behaviors and their respective communication competency subscale based on Workplace Communication Behavior Inventory [11]. The independent variables are the verbal communication behaviors that take place in the leading cosmetic company in Malaysia and determine the most commonly practiced communication behaviors. This research then aims to establish the relationship between these communication behaviors and their respective communication competency, and identify the most effective communication competency subscale based on Workplace Communication Behavior Inventory [11]. The independent variables are the verbal communication behaviors that take place in the leading cosmetic company in Malaysia; the dependent variable is the communication competency, which is determined by the scores of the Communication Competence Questionnaire (CCQ). The variables of the study are presented in the framework in Figure 1, as seen below:

Research hypotheses
A few hypotheses were made as follows:

**H1:** Information sharing has a positive impact on communication competence.

The information-sharing factor is relatively important in determining communication competence. Information flows that consist of feedback can lead to an increase in employee job satisfaction. Pearson’s correlation can determine the relationship [39].

**H2:** Relational maintenance has a significant effect on communication competence.

The relational maintenance factor is considered crucial in defining communication competence. Employees are more likely to collaborate if their relationship is enhanced [37]. Pearson’s correlation can determine the relationship.

**H3:** Expressing negative emotions has a positive impact on communication competence.

Expressing negative emotions factor is one of the elements in determining communication competence. Experience of work can be worsening because frustration can damage the reputation of an organization [40]; [41]. Pearson’s correlation can determine the relationship.

**H4:** Organizing has a significant impact on communication competence.

The organizing factor is important in measuring communication competence. Employees are aware of what they are working on to work on the right track [42]. Pearson’s correlation can determine the relationship.

**METHODOLOGY**

The samples in the study were the employees from a leading cosmetic company, with a population size of 900. The
organization was chosen because of its dynamic non-bureaucracy working environment that would serve as an exciting subject for identifying the verbal communication behaviors in this study. Simple random sampling is selected as the sampling method. Therefore, each employee in the organization has an equal chance to be selected based on the name list given by the Human Resource Department. The usable responses to this study were 277.

In this study, the researcher adopted and adapted the Workplace Communication Inventory (WCBI) \([11]\) that comprises 33 verbal communication behaviors that took place in a leading cosmetic company. These behaviors were then segregated into four subscales, namely: information sharing, relational maintenance, expressing negative emotions and organizing. Higher scores of each item in WCBI indicated a high frequency of that particular verbal communication behavior. This is an interval data as the higher scores of the data indicate a higher rate of the specific behaviors.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The findings of the study were based on 227 questionnaires that were collected from the respondents. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics which were asked in Section A of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20-30 years old</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-40 years old</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41-50 years old</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51 years old and above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of expertise</td>
<td>Accounting/Finance</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts/Media/Communication</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education/Training</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales/Marketing</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in the company</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were evenly distributed among males and females as males make up 48% of the total respondents, while females make up the remaining 52% of the total respondents. This can be seen that both genders play equally important roles in the organization, as the number of males and females in the organization does not have many differences. As for the age group, the highest number of respondents were from the category of 31-40 years old representing 52.3% of the total respondents. The second-highest number of respondents were from the 20-30 age group (37.9%), followed by the 41-50 age group (8.3%). The lowest amount of respondents was from 51 years old and above age group (1.4%). This study, therefore, shows that the experiences of senior employees are valued by having a minority group of elderly respondents in the organization. Almost half of the respondents in this study are Chinese (49.1%) as the other two significant race groups in this study are Indians (23.1%) and Malays (20.9%). Meanwhile, other race groups are the minority, with 6.9% of the total respondents. This can be understood as Malaysia is a multiracial country with three main ethnic groups. These include Malays, Chinese and Indians. As for the field of expertise of the respondents, 42.2% of the respondents are from arts, media, and communication backgrounds followed by sales and marketing background (25.3%). Education and training background consists of 12.3% respondents, while only 10.5% of the respondents are from the accounting and finance field. The rest of the respondents are from operation background, which represents the remaining 9.7% of the total respondents. Most of the respondents are from the arts, media, and communications background due to the dynamic and interactive working environment, which requires communication across multiple parties and departments. Regarding the position in the company, almost all of the respondents are executives, with 82.7% participating in this study. Approximately 14.1% of the respondents are admin, while only 3.2% are managers. None of the directors involved in this study due to their hectic workload in the organization. As shown earlier, the majority of the respondents are 31-40 years old. Therefore, most of them are still at the executive level.

**Correlations results**

Based on Table 1, it is found that the correlation between variables of information sharing subscale and communication competence is significant \((r=0.836, p<0.05)\). As the r-value is positive, the information sharing subscale gave a positive impact on communication competence.
This result, therefore, suggests that there is a high positive relationship. Hence, as shown in Table 1, H1 is accepted. It is found that the correlation between variables of relational maintenance subscale and communication competence is very significant ($r=0.834, p<0.05$). As the $r$-value is positive, this result suggests that the relational maintenance subscale is directly associated to communication competence. Therefore, as depicted in Table 1, H2 is accepted. The results from Table 10 reveals that expressing negative emotions subscale had a high positive relationship ($r=0.829, p<0.05$) with communication competence. This indicates that expressing negative emotions subscale is directly associated to communication competence. Thus, as presented in Table 1, H3 is accepted. The results reveal that the organizing subscale had a high positive relationship ($r=0.833, p<0.05$) with communication competence. This result explains that organizing subscale is directly associated to communication competence. Finally, as shown in Table 1, H4 is accepted.

In sum, verbal communication behaviors are positively correlated with communication competence, indicating that independent variables do influence dependent variables. Generally speaking, this is consistent with the past evidence by scholars as scholars believe that verbal communication behaviors and communication competence will have a significant positive relationship.

**DISCUSSION**

One performs various verbal communication behaviors such as speaking, listening, joking and face-to-face discussion to achieve the primary function of a communication process. However, these are heavily influenced by the context of the surrounding interactive environment of each individual. Verbal communication behaviors could be learned, taught and improved by observing others, and changing or self-correcting their behaviors once enacted on external feedback or internal self-initiated social advancement [21]. The effect of communication behaviors can be reviewed in the form of observations (observation of people performing communication behaviors), self-reports of behaviors (what the people said they have done), and self-report of behavioral intention (what people said they would do in the future) [25]. In an organizational communication context, communication behaviors are mostly self-evaluated (frequency of certain behaviors practiced). Still, external parties evaluate the direct outcomes of such behaviors, including the respective competency of the behaviors, job satisfaction, and others, often in the job performance review. The interpersonal skill model identified that competency is based on the communication behaviors chosen. Effective communication behaviors are beneficial in all communication processes, particularly in the workplace. The results obtained are consistent with the interpersonal skill model as verbal communication behaviors help in increasing one’s communication competency. Excellent verbal communication behaviors help employees in compromising and cooperating within a team, especially in challenging situations [43].

In summary, the findings showed that there are significant effects of information sharing, relational maintenance, expressing negative emotions, organizing on communication competence. These can be a consideration for management parties to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of daily operational tasks. Besides, job performance can be more specific for communication planning to improve organizational effectiveness [44]. Notably, to compete with each other, the higher management of the organization must seek to improve the employees’ well-being, especially on the verbal communication behaviors being used to get consumer feedback from the market. Furthermore, having a strong competency is one of the brand personality dimensions in gaining competitive advantage [45].

**IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study had proved that social cognitive theory is suitable to be used to study verbal communication behaviors in enhancing communication competence. Employees with higher communication competence are more likely to perform communication tasks effectively and efficiently in an organization [21]. The results obtained are also consistent with the interpersonal skill model as verbal communication behaviors help in increasing one’s communication competency. Excellent verbal communication behaviors help employees in compromising and cooperating within a team, especially in challenging situations [46]; [43]. This study proved that the interpersonal skill model is a suitable and relevant model to be used to study verbal communication behavior in enhancing communication competence. Overall, this study reported that all four independent variables of verbal communication behaviors had been found to have a significant relationship in communication competence.

It can be said that employees of the top cosmetic company should focus more on verbal communication behaviors on this subscale. The results achieved in this study may provide valuable directions for an organization that has a similar working environment to increase knowledge with regards to the needs of employees to obtain the organizational goals. Furthermore, the impact of verbal communication behaviors and communication competence is relatively new in this research context. These findings will also contribute to employees’ communication competence for a policymakers’ decision-making process.

This study has focused on samples collected from one organization. Thus, the results taken from other organizations or industry itself with similar settings might yield different results. Moreover, in light of the possibility of alternative models for understanding communication competence, future researches may consider how these alternative models view communication competence in their perspectives. On top of that, further research may consider using the current questionnaire altered to suit general usage in any organization setting. Instead, a variety of data collection techniques could be used other than the questionnaire.

In a nutshell, verbal communication behaviors such as showing...
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respect may offer significant benefits to individuals in the organization. This study suggests that verbal communication behaviors do play an essential role in determining communication competence. All results of the hypotheses tested were supported by the findings of the research that examined the theoretical pattern of the relationship between verbal communication behaviors and communication competence. Also, the study indicates that the development of communication competence is one of the most functional areas of workplace transformation, which should be considered by the management [36]. Thus, this paper contributes to the existing literature on interpersonal skill model by showing that the importance of communication competence and its relationship with verbal communication behaviors in the pharmaceutical industry.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
Declared none

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