

## Personal Factors Influencing Communication among Teachers and Students of Medical Colleges of Bangladesh: Teachers' and Students' Views

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### Abstract

This descriptive type of cross sectional study was carried out to explore various personal factors that influences communication among medical teachers and students in selected medical colleges of Bangladesh. This study was done over a period of one year from July 2017 to June 2018. Five government & three non-government medical colleges were selected purposively. Students of first, second, third and fourth phases were selected by adopting convenience sampling technique Teachers were selected by convenience sampling technique and for in-depth interview by purposive sampling technique.

Medical teachers and students of selected medical colleges were the study population. Total 979 students and 50 teachers were responded through self-administered semi-structured questionnaire with five points Likert scale. Twenty teachers were responded through in-depth interview. Mutual respect (mean=4.44; 4.42), good communication skill (mean=4.40;4.16), listening skill (mean=4.32; 4.12), empathy (mean=4.32;4.32), self-disclosure (mean=4.27,4.42), sharing expectation (mean=4.29;4.28), awareness about own role (mean=4.25,4.34) were highly influencing personal factors that influence communication positively. Use of drugs/tobacco negatively affect communication, This study revealed some important factors that can improve communication .These are friendly relationship among teachers and students, open minded behavior of teachers, student- teachers cooperation, open discussion between teachers and students, morality and religious practice, motivation of students by teachers, understanding each other's, avoidance of students politics, responsibility of students & teachers etc. This study also revealed communication barriers such as fear and shyness to teachers, humiliation and discrimination of students by teachers and lack of interest of students Addressing these issues at all possible levels, measures should be taken to improve communication among teachers and students in order to improved teaching learning process ; so that ultimate goal of medical education can be achieved.

Key words: Personal factors, Communication, Student, Teacher.

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## Introduction

Communication is an important element of life. This is more important when it comes to education which is a vital tool for the welfare of the society<sup>1</sup>. Communication can be defined as the process by which ideas, information, opinions, attitudes and feelings are conveyed from one person to another. These definitions clearly show the link between 'teaching' and 'communication'<sup>2</sup>. Effective communication between teachers and students is a key factor to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning process<sup>3</sup>. Students' teaching is one of the most important task for professors; and enhancing the quality of learning plays a key role in professors' motivation and efficiency<sup>4</sup>. Trust and mutual understanding of students and professors is one of the important factor in learning and communication of students with professors increases students' confidence and motivation in learning<sup>5</sup>. There is a significant relationship between teachers' attitude, knowledge base, communication skills and effective classroom interaction. It was concluded that attitude, knowledge base and communication skills were significant correlators and predictors of effective classroom interaction<sup>6</sup>. Shared control, trust and intimacy identified as core dimensions of interpersonal relationship by Nicoli et al in England<sup>6</sup>. Personal attitudes are also influencing factors that could possibly influence communication and interpersonal interactions; there are many environmental effects that can impact communication as some people may not be confident enough to respond to others in a group interaction. Individuals that have a respectful attitude can positively affect communication<sup>7</sup>. As teaching learning is a two way process and be effective only when there is proper communication; so that communication is a

big area to be investigated. There are multiple factors affecting communication and among them personal factors are most important. Different studies addressing communication done in abroad but factors may be different in our setting. If we analyze these factors and take measures to improve these, there will be better communication; and teaching learning will be improved.

## Methods

This study was descriptive type of cross sectional study. Study period was from July 2016 to June 2017 (one year). The study was carried out among undergraduate medical students of all four phases and teachers of all levels (from lecturer upto Professor. Fives government and three non-government medical colleges were included. Sample size was 979 students and 50 teachers- for self-administered semi-structured questionnaire and 20 teachers for in-depth interview. Medical colleges were selected purposively and convenience sampling technique was adopted for data collection. Pretesting of the questionnaire was done among 64 MBBS students and 5 teachers and pretesting of in-depth interview schedule was done among another 3 teachers from a medical college other than the study areas. The questionnaire and interview schedule was finalized and Bangla version of questionnaire was adopted. For data collection written forwarding letter from the Director, Centre for Medical Education was taken and placed to the principals of the medical colleges for permission to conduct the study. The study was carried after prior consent from the students and teachers with necessary clarification. They were free to either participate or quiet from study. The filled-up questionnaires were collected from the students at the end of the class and

teachers returned those according to their convenience.

In-depth interview was conducted according to the teachers' convenience. Researcher was physically present & helped the respondents during the time of response with probing questioning. Response of in-depth interview was noted and tape recorded by the researcher, when allowed.

Data were checked, cleaned and edited after collection and then processed and analyzed by computer software SPSS program (IBM SPSS statistics 19). Likert scale was used to measure responses of the respondents of each item. Scores were given to each scale as: **strongly agree=5, agree=4, neither agree nor disagree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.**

There were forty-seven items in the questionnaire (three open questions )for analysis. Means, standard deviations of the scores and p values of the responses were presented in the tables after analysis.

If mean score was  $>4$ : situation of the item areas was highly satisfactory

If mean score was  $>3-4$ : situation of the item areas was satisfactory. Coding was done on the left margin and comments and reactions were noted on the right margin of the sheets. Useful quotations were identified immediately

If mean score was  $>2-3$ : situation of the item areas was not satisfactory

If mean score was 1-2: situation of the item areas was very poor in satisfaction

Data derived from in-depth interview was scrutinized immediately on the day of interview. Open questions and in-depth interview analyzed manually.

### Results

Total 979 students and 70 teachers participated in this study. Most respondents were from Dhaka (70.80% students and 78% of teachers) and maximum were female (70.08% students and 72% teachers). 64.5% of students and 56% teachers were from government and rest of the respondents were from non-govt. medical colleges. Opinions regarding personal factors affecting communication are displayed in tables.

### Interpretation of the mean scores were:

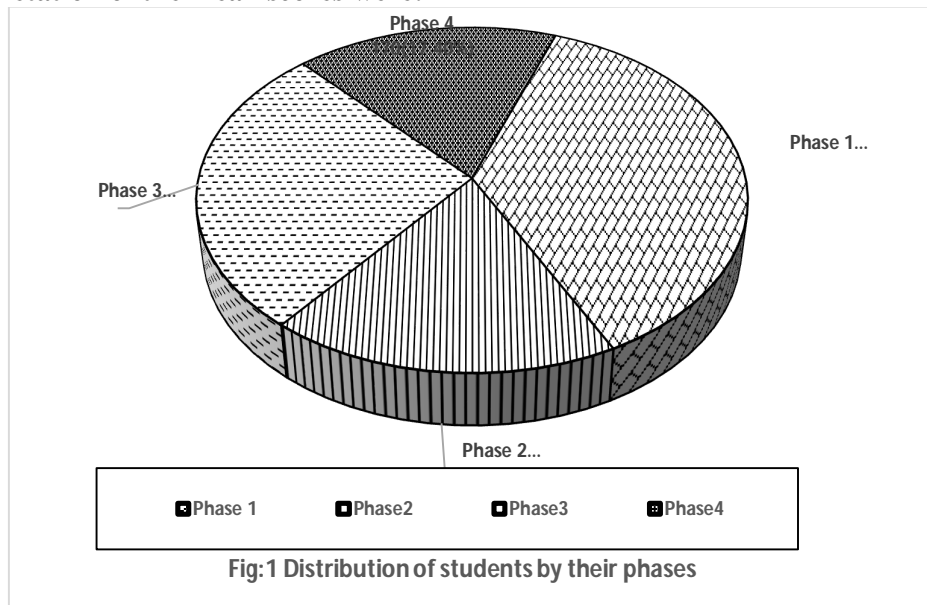


Fig:1 Distribution of students by their phases

Fig:1 Pie diagram shows that out of 979 students; 362 (around 37%) respondents were from 1<sup>st</sup> phase, 180(18%) from 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, 269(27%) from 3<sup>rd</sup> phase and around 17% from 4<sup>th</sup> phase.

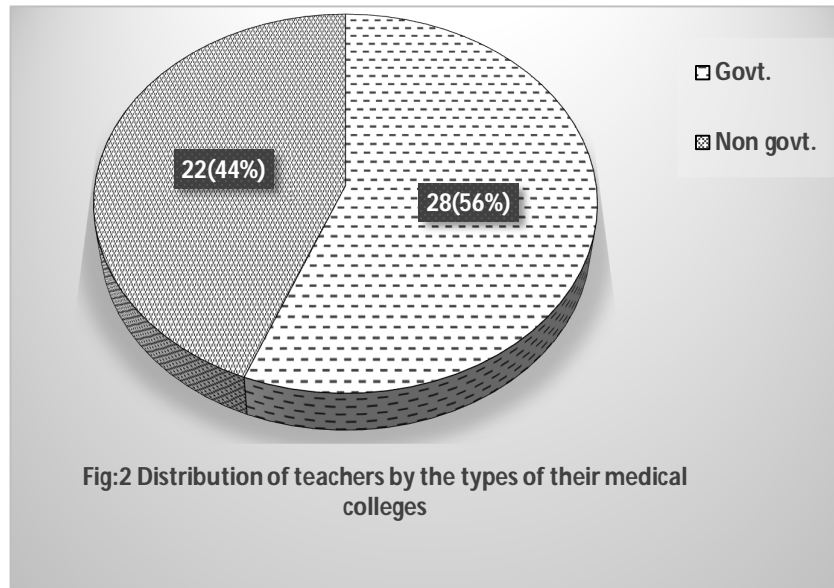


Figure:2 Pie diagram shows that out of 50; 28 teachers (56%) were from government medical college and 22 teachers(44%) were from non govt. medical colleges.

**Table 1 Distribution of medical students’ opinion regarding the personal factors that influence teacher student’s communication (n=979)**

Personal factors	Level of agreement (corresponding score)					Mean (±SD)
	SDA(1) f (%)	DA(2) f (%)	NANDA(3) DA(2) f (%)	A(4) DA(2) f (%)	SA(5) NANDA(3) f (%)	
No speech difficulty of students	22 (2.2)	67 (6.8)	81 (8.3)	544 (55.6)	265 (27.1)	3.98 (0.911)
Good listening skill of students& teachers	9 (.9)	19 (1.9)	60 (6.1)	561 (57.3)	330 (33.7)	4.321 (0.718)
Good Communication skill of students & teachers	11 (1.1)	12 (1.2)	29 (3.0)	448 (45.8)	479 (48.9)	4.40 (0.713)
Use of tobacco /drug by students	50 (5.1)	99 (10.1)	133 (13.6)	379 (38.7)	318 (32.5)	3.83 (0.139)
Love affair of students	102 (10.4)	245 (25.0)	250 (25.5)	236 (24.1)	146 (14.6)	3.08 (0.968)
Students extracurricular activity	31 (3.2)	67 (6.8)	87 (8.9)	510 (52.1)	284 (29)	3.97 (0.968)
Use of media e.g. Facebook by students & teachers	42 (4.3)	79 (8.1)	258 (16.2)	450 (46)	249 (25.5)	3.80 (1.043)

Awareness about own role (student/teacher)	6 (0.6)	18 (1.8)	74 (7.6)	512 (52.3)	369 (37.7)	4.25 (0.722)
Sharing expectation (student/teacher)	5 (0.5)	8 (0.8)	40 (4.1)	475 (48.5)	451 (46.1)	4.29 (0.656)
Mutual respect (student/teacher)	5 (0.5)	12 (1.2)	40 (4.1)	415 (42.4)	507 (51.8)	4.44 (0.680)
Empathy (student/teacher)	12 (1.2)	12 (1.2)	84 (8.6)	416 (42.5)	454 (46.4)	4.32 (0.781)
Self-disclosure (student/teacher)	10 (1.0)	37 (3.8)	93 (9.5)	377 (38.5)	461 (47.1)	4.27 (.859)
extrovert personality (student/teacher)	13 (1.3)	44 (4.5)	115 (11.7)	430 (43.9)	377 (38.5)	4.14 (0.885)
<b>Overall</b>						<b>4.08 (0.4122)</b>

Table 1 shows that personal factors have strong positive influence on student-teacher communication (overall mean=3.20), reversed scoring was done before analysis of two factors; use of drug/tobacco and love affair of students due to negativity of these questions.

**Table 2 Distribution of medical teachers' opinion regarding the personal factors that influence teacher student's communication (n=50)**

Personal factors	Level of agreement (corresponding score)					Mean ( $\pm$ SD)
	SDA (1)	DA (2)	NAND(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	
	%	%	%	%	%	
No speech difficulty of students	1 2	5 (10)	4 (8)	30 (60)	10 (20)	3.86 (.926)
Good listening skill of students& teachers	0 (0)	2 (4)	0 (0)	38 (76)	10 (20)	4.12 (.594)
Good Communication skill of students& teachers	0 (0)	2 (4)	5 (10)	26 (52)	17 (34)	4.16 (.766)
Use of tobacco /drug of students	0 (0)	6 (12)	9 (18)	20 (40)	15 (30)	2.12 (.982)
Love affair of students	1 (2)	14 (28)	11 (22)	17 (34)	7 (14)	2.70 (1.093)
Students extracurricular activity	2 (4)	4 (8)	3 (6)	34 (68)	7 (14)	3.80 (0.926)
Use of media e.g. Facebook by students& teachers	3 (6)	8 (16)	14 (28)	17 (34)	8 (16)	3.38 (1.123)
Awareness about own role (student/teacher)	0 (0)	1 (2)	2 (4)	26 (52)	21 (42)	4.34 (.658)
Sharing expectation /role (student/teacher)	0 (0)	1 (2)	3 (6)	27 (54)	19 (38)	4.28 (.671)
.Mutual respect (student/teacher)	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)	24 (48)	24 (48)	4.42 (.642)
Empathy (student/teacher)	0 (0)	1 (2)	4 (8)	18 (36)	27 (54)	4.32 (.653)

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Self-disclosure (student/teacher)	1 (2)	3 (6)	11 (22)	26 (52)	10 (20)	4.42 (.731)
extrovert personality (student/teacher)	0 (0)	5 (10)	4 (8)	30 (60)	10 (20)	3.86 (.808)
<b>Overall</b>						<b>3.82 (1.283)</b>

Table 2 shows that personal factors have strong positive influence on student teachers' communication ( overall mean=3.82) ,reversed scoring was done before analysis in two factors; use of drug/tobacco and love affair of students due to negativity of these questions and these two factors negatively influences communication(means are 2.12& 2,70).

**Table 3 Comparison of opinion regarding personal factors that influence teacher-students communication (n=979)**

Factor categories	Type of respondent	n	Mean (Std. Dev.)	t(df)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Personal factors	Student	979	4.09(0.412)	1.207(1027)	0.228
	Teacher	50	4.01(0.417)		
Personal factors	Male	396	4.06(0.440)	-1.62(977)	0.106
	Female	583	4.10(0.392)		

Table 3 shows no significant differences in opinion between students and teachers and also male and female respondent.

**Table 4 Distribution of opinions regarding most important personal factors that improve communication**

the most important personal factors that improve communication		
Themes	frequency	Percentage
Friendly relationship/ friendly environments	191	25.64
Open minded behavior	88	11.81
Students teachers cooperation	108	14.50
Open discussion	72	9.66
Mutual respect	63	8.46
Motivation of students	57	7.66
Understanding each others	58	7.79
Sharing expectation / opinion	49	6.58
Interesting classroom session	44	5.90
Giving feedback	49	6.58
Responsibility of students& teachers	23	3.08
Avoidance of students politics	22	2.96

#### In-depth interview

20 teachers of different medical colleges were included in in-depth interview schedule.

#### Opinions of teachers are presented below

Good personality with extrovert characteristic of teachers creates positive

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impact and so that it improves communication with students. Friendly environment with self-disclosure improve communication. In very much politeness, crossing the boundary might make the class out of control.

With good listening & communication skill help to develop better communication between them. Sharing expectation, open discussion and cooperation between teachers and students can remove the gap in communication.

Empathy, sympathy, understanding each other and mutual respect can further improve communication. Proper use of multimedia improve communication in classroom. But excessive use of internet and face book distract attention of students thus hamper teacher- student relationship.

### Discussion

Effective communication between teachers and students is a key factor to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The aim of study was to identify the effective personal factors in communication among students and teachers from the students' and teachers' point of views.

This study identified most important personal factors as good listening & communication skill, awareness about own role, sharing expectation (student/teacher), mutual respect, self-disclosure (student/teacher), extrovert personality of student/teacher. This study consistent with Abedini M (3) who identified humanity and ethical aspects of professors as well as trust and mutual understanding of students and professors as important factor in communication.

This study revealed that motivation of students, cooperation among students have positive influence in communication. These findings are not consistent with the findings of Abedini M<sup>3</sup>. He described scientific

knowledge, quality and mastery of teaching as well as teaching styles are more important than professors' experience which enhance the relationship between teachers and students, thereby improve the teaching and learning process.

To be effective, teachers have to try to minimize the barriers to communication. By making sure that the room is quiet and well lit; by speaking slowly and clearly; by only using words which the students should be able to understand. However, the most important way to overcome the barriers is two-way communication<sup>8</sup>.

This study revealed that two-way communication by constructive feedback improve communication. One-way communication where the sender cannot get any feedback is a barrier. Abedini M<sup>3</sup> also showed that interactive view which includes feedback as well as nonverbal communication can overcome this barrier.

In this study mutual respect, sharing expectation, understanding each other (table 1 and table 2) enhance communication and helps to remove barriers. This finding consistent with Isman et al.<sup>9</sup> who identified mutual understanding and sharing expectation as important factors that improve communication and remove barriers<sup>9</sup> When creating mutual understanding in communication physical, psychological and semantic barriers are all eliminated.

### Limitations of the study

1. The respondents and the medical colleges were selected purposively as well as conveniently (not randomly). Therefore, generalization of the study findings cannot be made properly.
2. Moreover, data were collected from a few selected medical colleges<sup>8</sup> of Bangladesh which may not reflect the actual scenario of the country due to small sample size.

3. Students and teachers put their opinion based on their perceptions, experiences and ideas. As the data was based on self-reporting so there might be a source of bias in the responses.
4. Same perceptions may be expressed by different students in different ways.
5. Time constrains of teachers as well as students may hamper detail opinions.

### Conclusion

Effective communication between medical teacher and students is the key to be succeeded in teaching learning. There are various factors influencing communication. This cross sectional descriptive study has been done to identify personal factor affecting communication. Teachers and students' views was taken through semi-structured questionnaire and in depth interview of teachers.

Multiple personal factors related to the communication between medical teachers and students are identified in this study. Good listening & communication skill, awareness about own role, sharing expectation (student/teacher), mutual respect, self-disclosure (student/teacher), and extrovert personality of student/teacher.

Good personality with extrovert characteristic of teachers creates positive impact. Sharing expectation, open discussion and cooperation between teachers and students can remove the gap in communication. Empathy, sympathy, understanding each other and mutual respect can further improve communication. Proper use of multimedia improve communication in classroom. But excessive use of internet and face book distract attention of students thus hamper teacher- student relationship. Maintaining friendly environment and cooperation between teachers and students were

identified as most important factors that improve communication. But very much politeness, crossing the boundary might make the class out of control.

So, continuous effort and positive attitude of the teachers with improved teaching skill can motivate students to learn. Positive and friendly environment with open minded behavior can help the students to achieve instructional objectives; making them lifelong learner. Thus, institutional goals can be achieved if there is proper communication between teachers and students.

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