

Faculty Forum

Interpersonal relationship

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Introduction People interact with each other during their daily life formally and informally. It may be official as well as social and thereby develops a feeling for each other and a relationship develops. It is an invisible connecting link between peoples coloured by emotions. Most of the time during our daily busy schedule, we remain unaware of the fact that through all these interactions we are making various types of interpersonal relationships.

Types of Interpersonal Relationship (IPR)

I. According to polarity, it may be –

i. Positive relationship: A friendly relation where both the groups want to be close. This type of relation is coloured by positive emotions like joy, excitement, pleasure and satisfaction.

ii. Negative relationship: Unfriendly relationship where both the groups wanting distance. Here the prevailing emotions are of irritation, hatred, animosity and dissatisfaction.

II. Psychodynamically, according to Erik Berne, the relationship depends on the corresponding ego state of the two individual. There are three types of ego states: child ego state, adult ego state and parent ego state.

These three different components are there in every individual psyche and any one of them may communicate and form a relationship with another individual with any form of ego state of the corresponding person; e.g. teacher-student relationship – here a child ego state of student makes a relation with parent ego state of a teacher. Again relationship between two friends is almost always between two adult ego states. The strength, nature and quality of relation depends upon the ego-states involved; e.g. relation between Meera *bai* and Lord Krishna is totally different from that of Radha and Krishna, where the first one is a relation between a child ego and parent ego, the later one is a relation between two adult egos.

Significance of IPR It is usually mutual but not mandatory. In unilateral relationship, the second person may not be at all aware of tremendous amount of emotional intonation of the first person, as for example the relation between Ekalabhya and Guru Drunacharya.

Again a mere handshake by a leader for a moment may be enough for establishing a positive relationship which is cherished by a follower for life long. Relationship always exists between interacting persons. No neutral point exists. Indifference is not neutral but a negative relationship. Relationship influences behaviour at work. Attitudes and motivations influence and get influenced by the nature of this relationship.

Relationship also contributes to stress and conflict at work which in turn affects the quality of the individual as well as organisations. A friendly relation though socially desirable, may not be always appropriate in relation to the work context. Authority must be concerned to build

up a healthy relationship not always friendly relationship that ultimately helps the individual as well as organization.

Some technique to develop healthy relationship Though these techniques are applicable in almost all situations, here it has been mentioned with special reference to the –

- a. Doctor-patient relationship
- b. Nurse-patient relationship
- c. Senior and junior staff relationship.

The techniques are –

- i. Artful listening: It increases the self esteem. It encourages talking freely and openly.
- ii. A message of concern and care must percolate from first person to second person.
- iii. Be liberal with appreciation and recognition when deserved by the second person.
- iv. Criticism should be not for condemnation but an attempt to improve.
- v. All behaviour must be above board and open.
- vi. Identify the problem individual quickly and correctly and may need different and specific types of interactions.
- vii. Focus on the issue not on the person: A mistake can be pointed out without making the person feeling guilt. Focusing on the person makes the person defensive.
- viii. Relationship with the boss is as important as with the juniors: Deal with him as he is, not as you want him to be. Don't try to impress him with superior knowledge. Don't meet him with the problems only but also with the possible solutions. Share his concerns if you can.

Behaviour to be avoided as it destroys the healthy IPR There are innumerable ways how a positive and healthy IPR may be destroyed. Still there are some which should be avoided.

1. Use of vulgar and harsh language.
 2. Scolding in the presence of others.
 3. Doing something else while he is speaking to you.
 4. Telling him that what he says is not important only because as he is a junior.
 5. Talking to him with raised voice and pointed finger.
 6. Saying things that you do not mean.
 7. Showing disregard for matters you have earlier said as important – rules and deadlines.
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8. Concern for own point of view only with total disregard for interest of others.

Theories of IPR There are various theories, which try to explain the IPR from various angles.

Social exchange theory: Relationship is influenced by the reward of the relationship as well as the reward they may potentially receive from the alternate relationship. According to this theory, all relationships exist only because it helps in exchange of gain and reward. For some it may be physical and for others it may be a psychological one.

Equity theory: It criticises social exchange theory and argues that people care more than just reward and gain but want equity and fairness in the relationship.

Dialectical theory: It is not a static one but a dynamic process and requires a constant effort to maintain it. Without effort and struggle, everything is destined to die and decay including IPR.

Attachment style theory: It says that attachment style developed in childhood continue to influence the adult relationship.

Stages of development of IPR It is proposed by Mark Knapp's relational stages model. It mainly focuses on the relationship between two individuals. The stages are:

- i. Initiations – Usually very short lasting one. Greets each other, observes mannerism. It tries to make favourable impression.
- ii. Experimenting – Tries to get information of each other. Many relations end there only.
- iii. Stages of intensifying – Self disclosure is more common in this stage. Relation becomes less formal.
- iv. Stages of integration – A shared relational identity forms. Starts loving work together. It is noticed by others.
- v. Bonding – Legal/Formal announcement made.

Knapp's relationship termination model

- i. Differentiating – In this stage partner begin to stress the ME instead of WE. Begin to assert independence. It is a warning stage and needs to be addressed.
 - ii. Circumscribing – Here the communication decreases. Tend to avoid certain topic of discussion. Still outwardly may look normal.
 - iii. Stages of stagnation – Communication further decreases. No joint efforts or activities. Others begin to notice something is wrong.
 - iv. Avoiding – Pairs begin to physically avoid each other.
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v. Termination – Final stage and separate permanently in the form of divorce or other social/familial ways.