

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST M.B.B.S. STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Present day scenario, we are used to take didactic lectures to impart knowledge in the undergraduate curriculum. But it's now desirable to make some change in it to make learning more meaningful. Many students felt difficulty to express themselves confidently among teachers, examiners and their colleagues during first M.B.B.S. course due to lack of communication. **MATERIAL & METHODS:** The present research work was done on first M.B.B.S students (batch -2014) at Jhalawar Medical College, Jhalawar, and Rajasthan, India to promote the communication of students at the workplace with teachers, colleagues & peers and enables them to acquire specialized competence in communication skills. A predesigned questionnaires pre & posttest were given to them before and after the lecture & role play regarding verbal & nonverbal communication skills to evaluate the improvement. **RESULTS:** The pre and post test scores mean values were 34.89 and 40.87 respectively and difference was statically significant ( $P < 0.0001$ ). The 360\* evaluation showed that 46% students exhibited skilled behavior most of time (50 to 75% of the time), 19% students showed skilled behavior majority of time (more than >75% of time) and only 10% students rarely demonstrate the skilled behavior (less than <25% of the time) which they learned by session given by course coordinator. **CONCLUSION:** The results showed that almost all students are ready to learn new things like communication skills with their regular study schedule which make them more confident among teachers, examiners and their colleagues during M.B.B.S course & finally a good practitioner.

**KEY WORDS:** Communication skill, 360\* evaluation, Feedback, Verbal and Nonverbal communication.

### INTRODUCTION

Expressive and listening skills are two important communication skills which are required for successful future career of a Medical student (1). During college life, a student has to express his feelings, thoughts and expressions to get full attention of the listeners. In professional life, he can use listening skills to understand the feelings of others by showing respect for patients & their relatives (4).

**Emperor Frederick** – 13th century ruler of Roman Empire did an experiment on newborn babies to know

the language which had been spoken at birth time of mankind in Garden of Eden and find that all babies died due to no communication. So, he proved that lack of communication may be lethal (9).

Communication should be appropriate not only while interacting with patients, but also at the workplace, with colleagues and peers. Good communication skills during the training phase of doctors can build a strong foundation for good team skills and professional

behavior in the later years (5). The ability to effectively communicate with other people is an important skill mainly in medical field.

A curriculum on communication skills that will give guidelines for developing strategies to effectively respond to patient's emotions, approaches to educate or motivate patients and to deal with difficult situations like breaking bad news is yet to be included in many medical colleges in India. It is required that these techniques should not only taught in a systematic manner which make the young practitioners to acquire good communication skills but also they should be assessed (12).

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

As per MCI, Now undergraduate M.B.B.S student will be called as IMG (Indian Medical Graduate) who should have five competencies and communication skill is one of them.

The present study was undertaken to promote communication of students at the work place with teachers, colleagues and peers. The usefulness of early intervention of communication skill are not only on student examiner relationship but also their interpersonal relationship with seniors and colleague are proved.

### **MATERIAL & METHODS**

**STEP-1-** The present research work was done on first M.B.B.S students (batch -2014) at Jhalawar Medical College, Jhalawar , Rajasthan after taking prior permission from Institutional Ethical Committee (IEC) (Annexure-1). Total 97 M.B.B.S students had participated voluntarily. The prior consent was taken in written (consent form), from all students after informing them about the process and purpose of the present research work (Annexure-2). Now a predesigned questionnaire (prepared by course coordinator after validation by 5 faculty members) was given to them and it was the "pre-test" (Annexure-3). Every student was marked A, B, C, D and a1, b1, c1, d1etc. instead of their names and asked them to remember their codes for individual assessment purpose.

**STEP-2-** After Pre-test, a lecture on communication skills (general communication skill including Verbal, Non-Verbal and Written Communication, Importance of Communication & Barriers to communication and Interpersonal Communication skills including Soft skills, etiquettes while communicating in variety of situations etc.) was given by course coordinator followed by a demonstration with role play by 2013 batch M.B.B.S students (Annexure-4) and a video clip show related to the subject. After that again the same questionnaire was given to all students which was the "post-test". All students are asked to put their individual codes on questionnaire instead of their names.

**STEP-3-**All students were asked to fill a feedback form for feedback of the session. This feedback form was attached with post-test questionnaire & given to every student (Annexure-5).

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS**

1. By analysis of difference in scores of pre-test and post-test of every student (by pre designed questionnaire which has total 12 questions).
2. By Students feedback, noted in feedback form after the end of the session.
3. By filling pre designed checklist of every student during Viva voce examination in the Anatomy department by 3 faculty members of Anatomy after 2 weeks of the session (Annexure-6).
4. By filling Form 360\*. This evaluation was done in between pre and post university examination of first M.B.B.S students to note the overall improvement in communication skills by three faculty members (sensitized regarding learned communication skills) each from Anatomy, physiology and Biochemistry departments. (Annexure-7)

### **RESULTS**

#### **Questionnaire –**

The observation shows that post test scores were high in comparison to pre test scores, collectively and individually. The pre-test and post test scores mean values were 34.89 and 40.87 respectively (Table-1) and difference was statically significant ( $P < 0.0001$ ).

**Table.1- Distribution of Pre and Post test scores**

Group	Mean	SD	T Value	P value
Pre Test	34.89	6.65	8.3527	<0.0001
Post Test	40.87	3.20		<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>

**(A) Feedback-**

First question in feedback form was “How did you like this session?” Total 51.5% students liked the session very much & 44.3% liked the session.

**Table.2- Distribution of feedback of students.**

QUESTIONS		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALIDITY		
<b>1. How did you like this Session</b>	OK	4	4.1	Valid		
	Liked	43	44.3			
	Liked very much	50	51.5			
	Total	97	100.0			
<b>2. Content</b>	OK	2	2.1	Valid		
	Good	11	11.3			
	Very Good	38	39.2			
	Excellent	46	47.4			
	Total	97	100.0			
<b>3. Presentation</b>	Did not mark	2	2.1	Valid		
	Normal	1	1.0			
	Good	5	5.2			
	Very Good	38	39.2			
	Excellent	51	52.6			
	Total	97	100.0			
<b>4. Usefulness for learning</b>	Did not mark	2	2.1	Valid		
	Ok	1	1.0			
	Normal	1	1.0			
	Good	4	4.1			
	Very Good	31	32.0			
	Excellent	58	59.8			
	Total	97	100.0			
	<b>5. Repetition of this Session</b>	Once in Year	8		8.2	Valid
		Once Every six Months	9		9.3	
		Once Every 3 Months	21		21.6	
Once in Months		36	37.1			
Regularly		23	23.7			
Total		97	100.0			

- he feedback of second question showed that 47.4% students had marked excellent for the content of session (Table-3), 52.6% students marked the presentation as excellent and 39.2% students find the

presentation very good . Total 59.8% & 32% students find the session excellent and very good respectively regarding Usefulness for learning purpose.

- Third question was regarding Repetition of this Session. Maximum students (37.1%) mentioned that such type of session should be organized every month. Second maximum strength of students (23.7%) wants these sessions regularly in the institution. 29.9% students did not mention any comment in feedback form. Few students had comments like “there should be More Questions in Questionnaire” , “ Best Session but Wrong Timing” , “More Chances for listeners to put their views” and “such presentations are Making Students more Confident” etc.

**(B) Check list responses of students-**

- There were total 14 questions of communication skills and interpersonal relations in the checklist. The results showed that about 65% students introduce themselves to the teacher during face to face contact. More than 80% students greeted the teacher but only 64.6% and 50.5% had eye contact and open posture during facing the teacher respectively. About 80.8% students had showed respectful manner in front of examiner and 85.9% students were nodding frequently. 79.8% students expressed thanks before leaving but maximum students (73.3%) could not encourage subject related question and (83.8%) students failed to ask focused & directive questions to clarify subject related points in front of teacher due to hesitation or lack of confidence.

**Table. 3 - Distribution of Check List responses of students.**

S.NO	Response	No of students	Percentage
Q1	Yes	34	34.3%
	No	65	65.7%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q2	Yes	34	34.3%
	No	65	65.7%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q3	Yes	80	80.8%
	No	19	19.2%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q4	Yes	64	64.6%
	No	35	35.4%
	Total	99	100.0%

Q5	Yes	50	50.5%
	No	49	49.5%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q6	Yes	43	43.4%
	No	56	56.6%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q7	Yes	50	50.5%
	No	49	49.5%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q8	Yes	54	54.5%
	No	45	45.5%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q9	Yes	85	85.9%
	No	14	14.1%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q10	Yes	80	80.8%
	No	19	19.2%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q11	Yes	26	26.3%
	No	73	73.7%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q12	Yes	16	16.2%
	No	83	83.8%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q13	Yes	32	32.3%
	No	67	67.7%
	Total	99	100.0%
Q14	Yes	79	79.8%
	No	20	20.2%
	Total	99	100.0%

**(C) 360 \* Evaluation**

- According to inter observer variability, the views of Observer 1 and Observer 3 were approximately same. The results show that 46% students showed skilled behavior most of time (50 to 75% of the time), 19% students showed skilled behavior majority of time (more than >75% of time) and only 10% students rarely demonstrate the skilled behavior (less than <25% of the time) which they learned by session given by course coordinator.

**Table 4 - Distribution of 360\* evaluation.**

skills	No	Percent
<b>Rarely demonstrates (less than &lt;25% of the time)</b>	10	10.0
<b>Sometimes demonstrates (25 to 50% of the time)</b>	25	25.0
<b>Demonstrates in most of time (50 to 75% of the time)</b>	46	46.0
<b>Demonstrates majority of time (more than &gt;75% of time)</b>	19	19.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100.0

## DISCUSSION

The observations of present research shows that post test scores were high collectively and individually in comparison to pre test scores. The pre-test score and post test score mean values were 34.89 and 40.87 respectively and difference was statically significant. These findings are in consistence with the observation of **Hausberg et. Al (2012)** who studied the enhancement in medical students' communication skills and did the evaluation of undergraduate training program. The students were selected from standard degree program and surveyed at the beginning and end of the project. A questionnaire was given to group of students to evaluate the whole module and to assess not only their skills but also standardized the expert rating of given module. The results proved that the students who attended the session, have considerable improvement in communication skills, which they learned by newly developed training program. It is also noted that intervention group of medical students had a greater degree of self-assessed competence when they compared with other comparison groups.

The checklist responses of students and 360\* evaluation in present research work showed positive impact in their behavior and attitude. This is as similar as the results of Levinson et al (2010) who did a study on the physician communication skills for patients centered care. The method she used for measuring communication skills of physicians include direct observation of behavior, interview of patients & surveys in predesigned

questionnaire about their experiences during hospital visit. She observed that knowledge of communication skills have positive impact on patient's satisfaction, self management and treatment adherence. She suggested to the Policy makers and stakeholders of health sectors that they must promote the training grants, payment incentives, certification requirements, and other mechanisms for physicians to develop effective patient-centered communication.

## CONCLUSION

Competency Based Medical Education (CBME) has been implemented by MCI to M.B.B.S batch 2019 to all Medical Colleges of India. The purpose is to produce an IMG (Indian medical Graduate) , which should be an efficient doctor with five competencies like Professional, Clinician, Communicator, Leader and Lifelong learner. Better communication always help a medical student to feel confident during M.B.B.S course and a competent Doctor in professional career.

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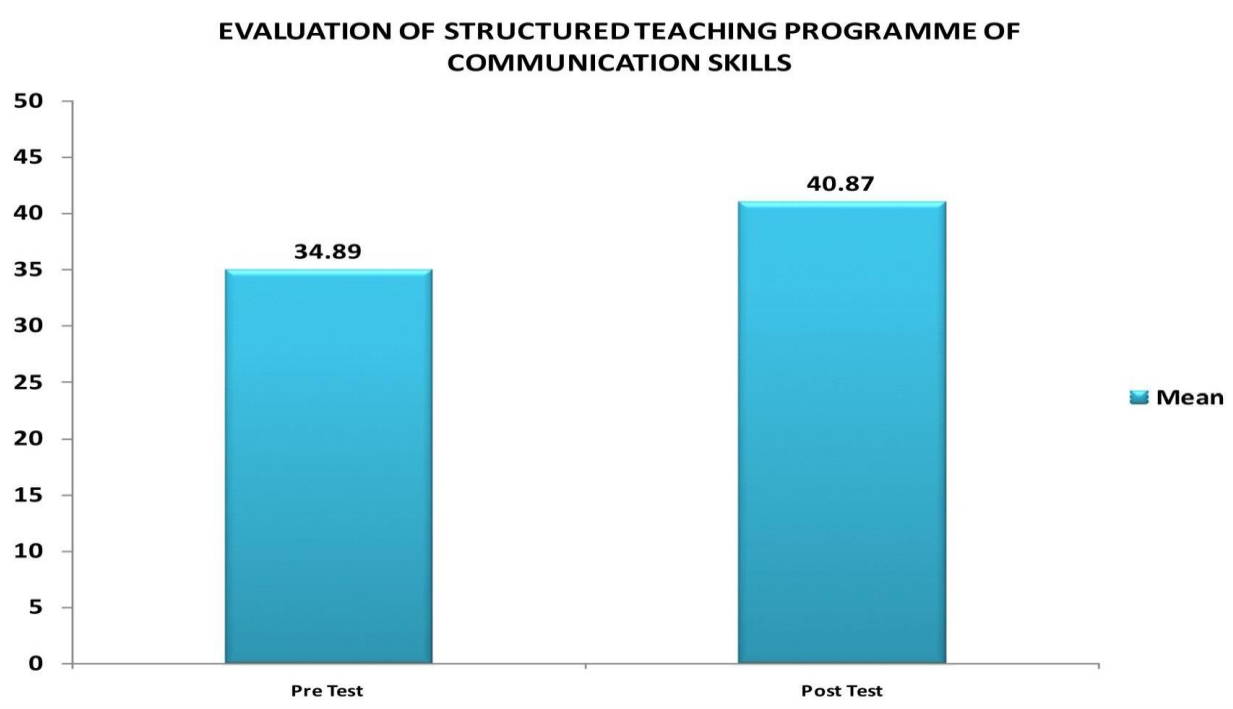
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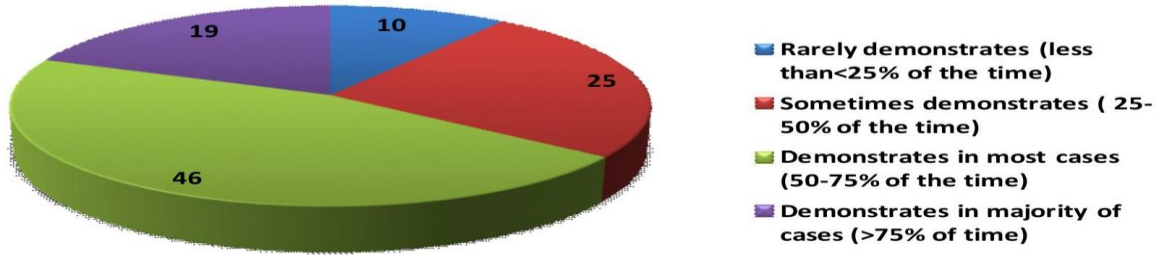
**FIGURE NO- 1 – Evaluation Of Structured Teaching Programme Of Communication Skills**





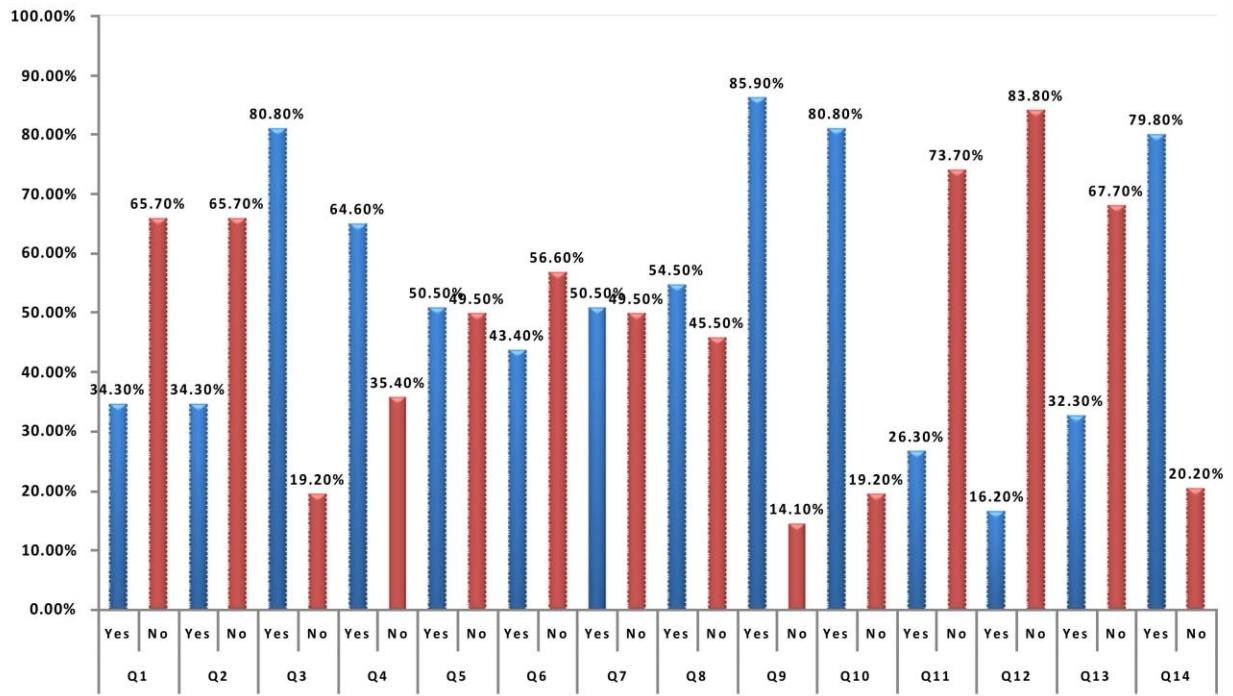
**FIGURE NO- 2 – 360 \* EVALUATION OF STUDENTS BY FACULTY.**

**360\* EVALUATION**



**FIGURE NO- 3 – CHECK LIST RESPONSES FOR OSPE/ROLE PLAY.**

**CHECK LIST RESPONSES FOR OSPE / ROLE PLAY**



**FIGURE NO- 2 – ROLE PLAY BY M.B.B.S STUDENTS**



## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Note- Read all questions carefully and tick mark the appropriate answer in given options.**

**Question-1. How do you greet your teachers?**

- (a) Greet plainly.
- (b) Smile warmly and greet.
- (c) Bow & greet.
- (d) Do not greet always.
- (e) I do not find it necessary to greet teachers.

**Question-2. How do you introduce yourself to a teacher/senior?**

- (a) Greet & introduce.
- (b) Speak the relevant things only.
- (c) Ask for permission before starting.
- (d) I do not think, introducing is necessary.
- (e) Do not greet, directly come to the point.

**Question-3. Do you make frequent eye contact while conversing?**

- (a) Only with my friends.
- (b) With my friends & seniors.
- (c) With teachers too.
- (d) Do not make eye contact as I am nervous.
- (e) Do not make eye contact as I do not find it necessary.

**Question-4. what sort of posture do you acquire while conversing?**

- (a) Do not give much thought to posture.

- (b) Stand straight with joined hands.
- (c) Stand straight with hands free.
- (d) Nods & move hands while talking.
- (e) Maintain a very casual posture.

**Question-5 while addressing someone, what language do you prefer?**

- (a) Interact in language, I am comfortable with.
- (b) According to the listener.
- (c) English, because of the norms of allopathy course of M.B.B.S.
- (d) Hindi always.
- (e) Conveying thoughts is important, language does not matter.

**Question-6. While interacting with opposite gender, you....**

- (a) Hesitate while talking.
- (b) Maintain a suitable distance while talking but as a straight forward science student.
- (c) Interact similarly as you do with your friends.
- (d) Talk like friends with some people only.
- (e) Do not talk at all.

**Question-7. During a conversation, you fail to understand something...**

- (a) You would interrupt then & there and demand explains.
- (b) Would clear your doubts towards the end.



- (c) Would try to understand it on your own.
  - (d) Would ask someone else to explain.
  - (e) Would let it be 7 ignore it.
- Question-8. While conversing, as a listener you.**
- (a) Listen carefully, paying attention to every word.
  - (b) Pay attention only to some parts.
  - (c) Do not pay any attention.
  - (d) Interrupt the speaker for explanation.
  - (e) Get involved in the topic of conversation and put questions.

- Question-9. Do you express yourself better in writing OR in orating?**
- (a) Better in writing, as I get more time to think.
  - (b) Better in writing, as I hesitate in face to face conversation.
  - (c) Better while speaking as I am spontaneous.
  - (d) Equally in both the ways.
  - (e) Not able to express in either ways.

- Question-10. In a group discussion, if you seem to disagree to an opinion...**
- (a) You would walk out immediately.

- (b) Aggressively prove your opinion to be better.
- (c) Would give a rational explanation for your opinion.
- (d) Respect others opinion and won't try to change it.
- (e) Stay quiet and go with the majority.

- Question-11. In a conversation, I...**
- (a) Give time & space to other people to speak.
  - (b) Encourage others involvement.
  - (c) Want to be the center of conversation.
  - (d) Do not appreciate things said which are not in my interest.
  - (e) Do not participate at all.

- Question-12. Do you greet when a conversation ends?**
- (a) Only when conversation is pleasant.
  - (b) Greet OR say thank you every time, as a closure of discussion or expressing satisfaction.
  - (c) Do not always greet.
  - (d) Greet only when the person is well known to you.
  - (e) Do not find it necessary to greet at the end of a conversation.

(THANK YOU)

Total Score.....

Signature of course coordinator.....

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