## International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) ISSN: 2319-7064

SJIF (2020): 7.803

# The Role of Interpersonal Communication Skills in Human Resource and Management

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Abstract: Interpersonal communication skills have become the need of the hour in the current scenario. Individuals must be adept at getting their point across without offending or hurting anyone. Organizations seek those individuals who possess technical and interpersonal communication skills for all the business requires their employees to communicate within the organization and outside the organizations to carry out various functions related to the job. This study illustrates the key interpersonal communication skills and their role in the human resource and management area. The methodology adopted was a qualitative survey consisting of open and close - ended questions. The findings suggested that the domains of HR and management have similar interpersonal communication skills. The current curriculum in educational institutions is not at par with the needs of the students. Thus, it needs to be revised to include courses on IPCS.

Keywords: Interpersonal communication skills; Human resources; Management; ESL; EFL

### 1. Introduction

Earlier, organizations relied on their employees' technical skills for success. Nevertheless, since the digitalization of the workplace, employees' communication skills have become a deciding factor for an organization's success. This is because the functioning of an organization involves dealing with its human resources and managing them effectively to carry out various tasks associated with consumers, which depends on communication at various levels: interpersonal level, group level, mass level.

Communication is an active process taking place around us all the time. We spend approximately 70% of our time communicating (sharing and receiving information) through various means.

The word "communication" originated from two Latin words, "communicare" and "communis," meaning "to impart," "to participate," "to share, " or "to make common." The sense of sharing is inbuilt in the very beginning and meaning of "communication."

According to Keith Davis, "Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another."

According to William Newman and Charles Summer, "Communication is an exchange of ideas, facts, opinions or emotions of two or more persons."

According to Peter Little, "Communication is a process by which information is transmitted between individuals or organizations to understand response results."

The definitions given above imply that communication is a two - way process. The key elements involved in communication are - sender, message, medium, channel, response, and feedback. However, these elements would not suffice completely. Cooperation and understanding between the sender and receiver should be present for effective communication.

"Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speech, body language, and above all, the effectiveness with which you listen. To communicate effectively, it is important to take into account culture and context" (DPES, 2005: 6). For work and career, technical skills and a related professional degree are crucial for eligibility. Although, as indicated by recent studies and research, interpersonal communication skills (IPCS) have become essential for achieving and maintaining success in congruence with the current digitalized and globalized world. Employers actively seek out and hire individuals who not only have the required technical and professional qualifications but are also equipped with good interpersonal skills. Thus, preference is given to qualified candidates with good interpersonal communication skills.

Interpersonal communication skills are those verbal and non - verbal skills through which individuals communicate their message to the other party. IPCS is essential for maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships and the smooth functioning of an organization. That is why the human resources and management department (directly involved in interactions with individuals inside and outside organization) must be proficient in IPCS. This is because there are always issues and conflicts emerging in the workplace between employees. Often, the employees face problems with the company's management, and as a result, leave the organization. All of these issues are related to the lack of proper communication and treatment of employees. This is where the role of IPCS comes into play in the HR and management department. IPCS makes a positive impact on employee output and better conflict resolution.

The objectives of this research on 'The Role of Interpersonal Communication Skills' were as follows:

- 1) What is the role of IPCS?
- 2) Role of IPCS in HR
- 3) Role of IPCS in Management

Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021

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### International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)

ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2020): 7.803

Furthermore, the study also focused on determining the opinions of individuals on the matter of implementation of IPCS in their respective institutions and overcoming issues related to the same.

### 2. Literature Review

Interpersonal skills (IPS) are soft skills that help us successfully live, work, and maintain healthy relations with others. Professionals with good IPS improve these capacities through regular practice and repeat. However, some professionals with less developed social skills seek to learn and integrate them into their everyday lives. IPS skills go beyond communication and include emotional intelligence (sensitivity to emotional state), understanding and managing oneself, and others. Interpersonal communication is a conversation between two persons or between one person and a group to group).

To effectively communicate, the following are a few requirements: verbal skills, nonverbal skills, empathy, positive attitude, problem - solving, problem - solving, decision - making skills, active listening, assertiveness, resilience, negotiation skills, team player attitude, patience, etc. instead of making a point list)

According to Berko et al. (2007), the communicator's acknowledgment of each other's uniqueness and the form of messages that exhibit that perception is the base of interpersonal communication (as cited in Nehal, 2017).

Klein et al. (2006) stated that interpersonal skills consist of various social skills and competence, face - to - face communication, human relational skills, and soft skills. All these skills help individuals perform better (home, workplace environment) than those who lack them.

### **Historical Overview**

The phrase "human resource management" has been in use for the past two decades. Earlier, the domain was referred to as 'personnel administration' (Price, 2011). Marosein's acknowledgment of the notable rise in competing needs that business establishments started experiencing by the late 1950s was because of globalization, deregulation, and fast technological advancement (Paauwe, 2004). The purpose (role) of communications in human resources was considered irrelevant at these preparatory stages chiefly because the period was - agricultural age, where the role of a consumer was not as significant as it is now. However, in the industrial era (the late 1960s to 1990s), the role of the employees and the customer started to be observed in the business field (Debrah & Budhwar, 2001). Hence, employees became a necessary resource with indispensable role in long - term success through their engagement and contribution in attending customers and delivering customers' satisfaction. Following then, the idea of happy employees for the benefit of satisfied customers was acquired and promoted by academics and practitioners by the concepts of in - house communications and human resource management (Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008).

In brief, the 1950s saw organizational communication focusing on the role of communication in improving

corporate growth and organizational output. Throughout the 1980s, the [business] field transformed from being business - oriented to communication - oriented as the emphasis redirected to the constitutional function of communication in business establishments. In the 1990s, the impact of analytical theory on the field was encountered as organizational communication scholars began focusing more on communication's prospects to abuse or facilitate organizational members (as cited in Saina & Muya, 2015).

### Role of IPCS in HR and Management

Every day, people spend most of their time in the company of others. At home, these interactions are with family members, friends, and acquaintances, while at the workplace, these are with superiors (Superiors, Managers), colleagues, and subordinates (broadly speaking). Furthermore, people also have to interact with several others from varying vocations to meet their daily demands.

Thus, [good] IPCS help people maintain a healthy balance in their interpersonal relationships, which are the most critical determiners of their overall success in their lives and careers.

Ferris et al. (2001) empirically stated that IPS shows workplace results; dedication, task performance, interpersonal relations with colleagues (as cited in Nehal, 2017).

Interpersonal communication skills make a person likable, thus helping them maintain stability both in the workplace and at home.

According to Kraiger and Kirkpatrick (2010), IPS are a substantial predictor of business and professional achievement and simultaneously indicate decreased organizational achievement and problem solving (as cited in Nehal, 2017).

Bad temperaments of managers and lack of empathy towards their employees are the top reasons people switch jobs. For example, an angry and impatient manager might be able to get the job done by his employees on time. However, in the long run, he is likely to lose the human resources of his organization—an indication of a lack of effective IPCS.

Managers with good IPCS can better keep the work environment positive and productive, which helps build trust with their employees, thus retaining them.

The knowledge, talents, and aptitudes employees require to contribute favorably towards organizational development reach far beyond the technological/scientific skills for which most employees are selected and appointed. Wright and Snell (1998) emphasized the significance of flexibility [adaptability] of the workforce achieved by employee ability and potential development when aiming for organizational growth. Consequently, the role of HRD becomes particularly crucial in terms of worker training and advancement and in ascertaining ways organizations can benefit from their employees' knowledge and skills (Purcell & Boxall, 2000).

Pearn et al. (1995) defined the HRD professional as optimal to aid strategic learning and promote a learning environment

Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021

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## International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) ISSN: 2319-7064

ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2020): 7.803

promoting change. McLagan (1996) describes several roles for HR personnel that equip them to sustain individual and group development required for thriving organizational change. The roles of an HR are strategic/diplomatic advisor, administrator and developer of HR operations/learning programs, organizational shift adviser, work and organizational design specialist, and many more.

According to Dooreward and Benschop (2003), the organizational transition success or failure is reliant on the "unique contribution of HR" (p.274). In a study of 30 manufacturing firms, Shipton et al. (2005) demonstrated that implementing specific HR practices was predictive of significant organizational change and reform, fundamentally through their influence on organizational learning. MacDuffie and Pil (1999) illustrated how HRM practices intended to enhance employee skills and motivation had positive outcomes for 'learning factories' or companies focusing on creating learning conditions favorable to process enhancement. Laursen and Foss (2003) suggested that by merging particular HR practices, an organization supports the decentralization of problem - solving so that progress can be planned and executed by the persons concerned in the targeted work processes (as cited in Jorgensen & Hyland, 2007).

The studies that further signify the crucial role of IPCS in HR and management functions within business organizations are mentioned below:

According to Dibsie (1990), the percentages of social/interpersonal skills current management held were as follows: 88% of experienced (senior - level) managers had exceptional manners, while the percentage for mid - level managers dropped to 40% and 12% for 1990 MBA graduates (Lovett & Jones, 2008).

According to Schaffer and Kelley (1993), data collected from graduates of B - schools indicate the increasing evidence that recent graduates lack the basic etiquette skills vital for success in the competitive business world and that preparedness for the same (IPCS) is relatively lacking (Lovett & Jones, 2008).

To deal with this lack of proper business manners/IPCS, Kelley, in 1990, recommended that the curriculum at B - schools be revised to incorporate social and interpersonal skills.

According to Kelly (1990), Marketing majors need to acquire these skills more than any other major as their careers most directly involve customers (Lovett & Jones, 2008).

A study led by Lovett & Jones (2008) at the University of Texas at Brownsville's School of Business explored and estimated the following areas: the value of social/interpersonal skills in the business administration field; the coverage of social/interpersonal skills within the BBA curriculum; and the current mastery and awareness of social and interpersonal skills among the BBA students who demonstrated the following results: 81% students felt the need for IPCS to be included in their program and 62%

students believed that social/interpersonal skills have been declining, and thus indicated a need for their curriculum to incorporate courses on social/interpersonal skills.

A recent study by Calanca et al. (2019) shows that some soft skills are valued more than others in the job market and provide employees with a wage benefit.

Human resource is human capital, an investment that can enhance itself, increasing long - term profit several times over. Its value goes beyond simple money. An HR manager is directly linked to the recruitment and selection process, developing a staffing plan, and making policies for its work culture, making [HR manager] an asset for their organization.

A good HR manager is also expected to have excellent cross - cultural communication skills, for organizations tend to have people from various cultural backgrounds working for them.

According to Mishra (2012), negotiations and mediations at the global level depend mainly on effective communication. The current global scenario in business involves outsourcing, that is, companies employing people from outside their own company/country to finish tasks at much lower costs.

People on a job search often come across advertisements by companies mentioning the requirement of a recruiter to recruit clients from outside the country. For example, a US - based company employs people from India to carry out recruitment functions such as scanning resumes/C. V. s and interviewing candidates (from the US). This process is called outsourcing and is very popular in the corporate sector. Companies employ foreigners who have an excellent command of English because most business transactions occur in English, a global language. However, despite knowing the target language (English), employees frequently make faux pas because of a lack of non - verbal communication skills (reading gestures, facial expressions). This issue is an essential aspect of staying in a multicultural/multinational organization for a long time.

According to Bourne (2016) [effective], communication demands audience targeting, determining what distinguishes the audience on an individual level, and serving their communication expectations best (as cited in Oliver, 2019).

Management is the art of having things done through and with the people in formally organized groups. It is the art of building an environment where people can work and individuals can contribute towards accomplishing group goals (Koontz, n. d.).

Numerous research and studies have demonstrated the importance of social/interpersonal skills in the business management field. Mausehund et al., 1995, reports that a significant amount and variety of business publications (books, magazines) related to IPCS, consisting of etiquette in the workplace, indicate a specific interest by employers. Pearse (2005) recognized three principal co - words as bases

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### International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) ISSN: 2319-7064

ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2020): 7.803

to business success: Consideration, Cooperation, and Communication.

According to Minstberg (1994), managers must develop IPCS to analyze the organization's environment while interacting non - verbally to gather information on the organization's affective (emotional) aspects (as cited in Nehal, 2017).

As a result, innovative courses in business administration and management curriculum intended to develop various interpersonal (communication) skills from email etiquette to practical team - building skills are in demand. The significance of the specific social/interpersonal skills is apparent because approximately 50% of all business deals finalize during a meal (Wright, 2005). Casperson (2000) recommended practicing power etiquette to increase job promotion chances (Lovett & Jones, 2008).

The role played by IPCS in HR and Management department is becoming crucial for successful organizational development as demonstrated by this review of the literature and thus highlights the significance for business organizations of acquiring employees who would implement the same in their job - related activities within the organization.

### 3. Methodology

The type of qualitative research method implemented for conducting this study was a combination of case study and focus group with the help of the survey method. Case study and focus group research are conventionally implemented as stand - alone methods. Nevertheless, in this study, these two methods were combined to gauge the responses of individuals.

The survey questionnaire was created on the *Google Forms* platform, and the data was collected through the same. Then, it was shared with the target group of 30 individuals. The target group for the study was a combination of recent graduates, individuals currently enrolled in university (both in India and overseas), and working professionals (Business and engineering field) belonging to the 20 - 40 age group. The response rate was 90 percent.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions that were both open - ended and close - ended. The rationale behind asking the questions was to determine the following:

- 1) Importance of IPCS in career success and overall communicational efficiency,
- 2) Standards/aspects implemented in educational institutions related to courses and training of IPCS,
- The current level of awareness among individuals about interpersonal communication skills and their role in professional life,
- 4) IPCS proficiency level in L1 and L2,
- 5) Essential features of IPCS in HR and Management, and
- 6) Awareness regarding nonverbal skills and their significance.

#### 3.1 Relevance of the Study

HR and management require direct communication with people. Thus, only those individuals who are good communicators are hired for this job. Although the present world has globalized to a great extent and digitalization has become the oxygen for any business organization to thrive, the role of IPCS has also been accentuated because of the sole reason that digital transactions fundamentally rely upon communication. Furthermore, communication is the backbone of every successful organization. The digital age heavily relies on communication; therefore, the demand for individuals with good communication skills is rising.

However, some individuals lack good communication skills and require teaching and training for the same. This is where the role of an ELT professional becomes apparent. Although the ELT curriculum has various components that tend to the ever - rising needs in the communication field, awareness about interpersonal communication skills is still lacking.

Therefore, this study attempted to determine specific interpersonal communication skills that individuals need to be taught at the university level. Thus, well - trained ELT professionals who can teach these verbal skills (writing, speaking, listening, reading) necessary for communication and the interpersonal communication skills equally vital for one's success in today's excessively global and digital world are in demand more than ever. This is what makes this study relevant to the field of English Language Teaching. ESL/EFL teachers need to focus on instilling necessary interpersonal skills in their students to help them succeed in environments that require the same.

### 3.2 Significance of the Study

This study highlights some crucial interpersonal communication skills and their role in everyday interactions at the workplace. Generally, individuals have to learn and improve these skills after joining institutes that train them in cliche skills while leaving out the essential aspect of communication: interpersonal communication skills. ELT professionals are directly involved in teaching and training students to communicate in English effectively. However, they only focus on teaching verbal skills and fail to teach critical (IPC) skills for career success.

The role of IPCS in HR and management' illustrates the need to teach these skills on the educational level while incorporating theoretical and practical aspects of the same and training future ESL/EFL teachers to include them in their teaching pedagogy on communication skills.

### 4. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are as follows:

 Lack of time due to Covid - 19 as the majority of students were either afflicted with Covid - 19 themselves or had family members dealing with the same, which made it impossible to conduct personal or telephonic interviews, so an innovative and fast method of data collection was implemented in carrying out this study

Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021

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### International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)

ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2020): 7.803

that only provided information on a broad aspect rather than an in - depth one.

 Some areas had to be left out due to lack of time and response on behalf of the target group, as responses would not have been sufficient had they been included in the survey.

This methodology section highlighted the research method used to conduct this study which included collecting relevant literature on the topic and relating it to the current scenario, the relevance of this study which outlined its relation or relevancy to the field of ELT, the significance of the study that gave an idea about its importance. Finally, the limitation of the study section illustrated the weaknesses of the study, which could be overcome by time and uniformity.

### 5. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the analysis and results of the data collected during the research.

The questions in the survey aimed to establish the role of IPCS in HR and management and tried to determine the way education is currently provided in different colleges and universities in terms of IPCS. The focus of the study and survey was to explore the extent to which students from English Language background demand these skills in their curriculum.

### Question 1 - Age

The survey participants were asked to choose an option of the age range to which they belonged. Around 88.9% of respondents fell under the 20 - 25 age range, 7.4% were from the 36 - 40 range, and 3.7% were from the 26 - 30 category.

### Question2 - Graduation Status

The survey participants were asked about their graduation status, to which 63% responded as graduated, and 37% were currently enrolled in a program at university.

### Question 3 - Employment Status

The survey participants were asked about their employment status through a close - ended question having two options (Employed and Unemployed). The currently employed participants were 20%, while 80% were unemployed (due to academic enrolment).

## Question 3 – Do you think IPCS are vital for career success?

The survey participants were asked whether IPCS was vital to their career, to which 100% of the participants responded with a yes.

## Question 4 – Was IPCS a component of your course curriculum?

The survey participants were asked whether IPCS a part of their curriculum. The majority, 59.3%, had IPCS in their curriculum, while 40.7% did not.

## Question 5 - How are/were you taught IPCS at your institution?

The survey participants were asked how they were taught IPCS at their institution. The responses were as follows - 40.7% were taught theoretically, 33.3% had a mix (theory + practical) mode at their institution. At the same time, a significant percentage, 25.9%, of respondents did not receive any education on IPCS at their institution.

## Question 6 – Did you join any soft skills training program during or after your graduation to learn IPCS for a job?

The survey participants were asked whether they ever joined any soft skills training program to learn IPCS to compete for a job. As high as 85.2% of participants never joined any such program while 14.8% did enroll.

# Question 7 – Did you ever enrolment in a professional skills development program before entering the workforce but could not? Why? Specify your reasons (Financial issues, time constraints...etc.)

The survey participants were asked whether they ever wanted to enroll in professional skills development program (IPCS related) before entering the workforce. The majority (48%) of the participants could not join the program because of time restraints due to academic involvement. (33.2%) did not feel the need to join the program because their educational institution provided training. Around 15% of participants could not join the program because they neither had the time nor financial resources at their dispense. Only 3.7% of the participants could not join the program due to a lack of financial resources.

# Question 8 – Did you ever feel incapacitated while dealing with a problem that required a lot of communicational exchanges?

The survey participants were asked whether they ever felt incapacitated while facing a situation that required a significant number of communicational exchanges. The responses indicated that 92.6% failed to communicate effectively, while only 7.4% responded negatively.

# Question 9 – Do you think that there is a need for educational institutions to incorporate IPCS (Theory + Practical) courses in the curriculum?

The survey participants were asked whether institutions should incorporate both (Theory + Practical) courses on IPCS in their curriculum. The response was 100% positive.

## Question 10 – Do you think that IPCS differ from one field to another?

The survey participants were asked whether IPCS differ from one field to another. According to 88.9% of survey participants, IPCS vary from one area to another while the rest, 11.1%, responded with a No.

## Question 11 – Do you have better IPCS in your mother tongue than your second language?

The survey participants were asked whether they had better IPCS in their mother tongue than their second language. The majority, 70.3% of the responses indicated that individuals have more command of IPCS in their native language than their second language, 14% did not have IPCS proficiency in L1, 11.1% had no idea or were unsure about their proficiency, and 3.7% had it equal in both L1 and L2.

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### **International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)**

ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2020): 7.803

## Question 12 – What are the most important IPCS in the HR field

According to most survey participants, the most crucial IPCS in HR were verbal skills, problem - solving skills, and overall communication skills.

## Question 13 - What are the most important IPCS in the Management field

The survey participants were asked to list the IPCS crucial for the Management department. The responses indicated that problem - solving skills, teamwork, decision making, negotiation were the essential IPCS for management.

### Question 14 – Which IPCS should your Superiors have?

The survey participants were asked the IPCS they would want their boss to have. The majority went for active listening, teamwork, problem - solving, and openness.

# Question 15 – Are you provided practical education/training on Body Language (Absent/Present) at your institution?

The survey participants were asked whether their institution had practical training on Body Language (observing and maintaining). According to 88.9% of respondents, their institutions lacked practical training in body language, whereas 11.1% of respondents received the same from their institutions.

# Question 16 - How to overcome the insufficiency of curriculum on Body language training in educational institutions?

The survey participants were asked how to overcome the issue of practical body language training in educational institutions. Approximately half (48%) of the respondents who were not receiving any education on body language training wanted their institutions to revise the curriculum and include such courses, 26% of them were receiving theoretical education only, so they wanted a more practical approach while teaching the course, 18.5% had no idea on how to tackle this issue. In comparison, 7.4% responded with leading oneself (self - education).

### 6. Discussion

The research findings indicate the need for practical IPCS training courses in the curriculum of the universities. This is because a large population of students lacks basic IPCS knowledge. The ones who possess it want it to be provided in a more practical approach, as the participants unanimously suggested that learning takes place through doing.

The participants also recognize the role of IPCS in HR and Management and believe that they are necessary for career success, so including IPCS courses as a compulsory component in the curriculum would be a wise choice to adapt to the needs of the ever - changing digital world that demands individuals to stay up to date on the most popular skillsets, IPCS being one of them.

### Hypothesis 1 – The role of IPCS is evident in HR

According to the research findings, the IPCS required for successful management are verbal skills (spoken and

written) for clear communication, nonverbal skills such as gestures, presentation skills, active listening, interpersonal skills like honesty, politeness, trust and recognition for employees, respectful behavior, decision - making skills, problem - solving skills, conflict resolution, positive attitude, team player attitude, assertiveness, empathy, patience, flexibility, openness, and critical thinking.

## Hypothesis 2: The role of IPCS is evident in Management

According to the research findings, the IPCS required for successful management are verbal skills (spoken and written) for clear communication, nonverbal skills such as gestures, presentation skills, active listening, interpersonal skills like honesty, politeness, trust and recognition for employees, respectful behavior, decision - making skills, problem - solving skills, conflict resolution, positive attitude, team player attitude, assertiveness, empathy, patience, flexibility, openness, and critical thinking.

## Hypothesis 3: Individuals have better IPCS in their L1 than L2

The research findings proved that individuals possess better IPCS than their second language in their mother/ native tongue. As 70% of the responses demonstrated the same.

The focus of this study was to illustrate the role of IPCS in HR and management and determine some issues that would help individuals become effective communicators if solved.

The key findings of the study were related to crucial IPCS required in the field of HR and management, which are mostly similar as the majority would like the HR and management department of an organization to possess excellent verbal skills (spoken and written) for clear communication, nonverbal skills such as gestures, presentation skills, active listening, interpersonal skills like honesty, politeness, trust and recognition for employees, respectful behavior, decision - making skills, problem - solving skills, conflict resolution, positive attitude, team player attitude, assertiveness, empathy, patience, flexibility, openness, and critical thinking.

According to the study, 92.6% of the participants were incapable of communicating effectively in the circumstances requiring active and exhaustive communication. Most of the participants struggle with IPCS in their L2; this issue needs attention from educational institutions as these individuals did not have access to IPCS education. The ones who had it were more of theoretical knowledge. This grave issue of proper training must be resolved by incorporating IPCS studies in the curriculum at graduation and post - graduation levels.

Participants exhibited the need to introduce a practical IPCS course since they could not enroll themselves in institutes that provide training on the same due to time and financial constraints. These professional development institutions charge a handsome amount of money that most individuals cannot afford. Those who can afford it do not have the time for it due to academic involvement. Thus, educational institutions should inculcate the same in their curriculum to aid their students.

### Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021

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### **International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)** ISSN: 2319-7064

SJIF (2020): 7.803

A high percentage of participants indicated the need to improvise the course curriculum in practical IPCS training. According to them, effective learning would happen if ESL/EFL teachers should also focus on instilling awareness about IPCS alongside the nuances of regular English communication. The participants suggested that teachers include activities related to body language teaching in which students should be taught how to maintain and read non verbal gestures.

### 7. Recommendations

Human resources and management is an undoubtedly essential aspect of any organization. Providing training to individuals on IPCS makes them an asset to themselves and the organization they serve.

Some of the recommendations as suggested by the researcher are as follows:

- Students should be provided sufficient training and guidance on IPCS irrespective of their programs.
- Body language studies could be incorporated into the course curriculum of all programs.
- Teachers should strive for practical methods of teaching.

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922

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Paper ID: SR211118020911 DOI: 10.21275/SR211118020911