

Relationship of Attitude and Practical Commitment to Prayer with Interpersonal Communication Skills in Students

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Considering the importance of prayer and its effect on personal characteristics, the present study was conducted to investigate the relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with interpersonal communication skills among students of Sanandaj universities, Iran.

Methods: This descriptive-analytical study was carried out in 2019 in Sanandaj, located in the west of Iran. The statistical population of the study (n=686) was selected through simple random sampling of students from Sanandaj universities. The instrument utilized in the research was a three-part questionnaire, including demographic information, attitude and practical commitment to prayer, and interpersonal communication skills. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS software (version 21) using independent t-test, correlation, and logistic regression.

Results: Based on the results of the regression test, a one-unit increase in attention to and practice of *mustahabbat*, commitment to perform prayers, and the effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life increased the possibility of having interpersonal communication skills with the odds ratios of 1.6, 1.11, and 1.09, respectively.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that attitude and commitment to prayer played an important role in interpersonal communication skills. However, practical attitude and commitment to prayer and interpersonal communication skills were higher in students in lower semesters.

Keywords: Attitude, Communication, Prayer, Students.

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Introduction

Spiritual wellbeing, along with physical, mental, and social health, promotes individuals' general health and harmonizes their other dimensions of health. Spiritual wellbeing, characterized by such features as having stability in life, being peaceful, feeling close to oneself, feeling connected to God, society, and environment, and having a purpose in life, has two dimensions

of spiritual wellbeing and existential health. Spiritual wellbeing reflects the relationship with God or a supreme power (1).

Spirituality, due to its individual and social infrastructures, influences physical health to a large extent, from developing a disease and its risk factors to passing away. It also prevents diseases by means of various mechanisms. Spirituality enables individuals to find a

unique meaning and concept in life and experience a power beyond themselves. Spiritual wellbeing can affect an individual's mental, social, physical, and overall health positively (2).

The act of saying prayers is considered one of the most important religious duties and fundamentals in Islam (3). In addition, as the most significant form of religious practice, it reflects the individual's relationship with God. Furthermore, it makes people purposeful (4), creates spiritual tools to connect with oneself and others (5), develops mental health and spiritual wellbeing (6), and provides reassurance and calmness in one's heart (7). Another beneficial effect of saying prayers on individuals would be the providing and strengthening of mental and physical health, among which reducing the anxiety and depression level, and increasing the illness acceptance and coping with it can be mentioned (8). To the best of our knowledge, no special research has been performed to investigate the relationship between prayer and communication skills, especially interpersonal communication skills.

Communication skills are defined as a set of potential and actual abilities enabling individuals to achieve acceptable and informative behaviors with which they can reach a reasonable level of emotional relationship. (9) Generally, communication skills are divided into two categories, namely basic and advanced. Interpersonal communication skills, necessary for all students to be acquired (11), falls into the category of basic communication skills (10).

Communication skills facilitate the establishment and strengthening of communication among individuals in society (10) and develop a way to express feelings and needs (12). In case of lacking such skills, individuals would face with loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, their self-esteem level and academic and professional achievements would decrease (13). The results of a study in Iran showed that 57.3% of university students have interpersonal communication problems (14).

There are a number of factors affecting individuals' social relationships, namely social

support, mental health, environmental compatibility, and education level (15). The literature review shows that no research has been dedicated to examining the relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with interpersonal skills. However, previous studies have examined other similar relationships, such as the relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with the dimensions of responsibility (16), between the act of saying prayer and students' general health (17), and between prayer and health behaviors (18).

In this study, the researchers are looking for the answers to two basic questions: 'Is there a relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with interpersonal communication skills?' and 'To what extent can the practical attitude and commitment to prayer predict interpersonal skills in students?' Therefore, the present study was conducted to determine the relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with interpersonal communication skills (e.g., responsibility) (19), as well as the relationship between prayer and an individual's general health (16) due to the lack of studies performed in this domain. The results of this study can be used in designing and implementing educational interventions to increase students' interpersonal skills and improve their attitude and commitment to prayer.

Methods

Research design

This descriptive-analytical study was conducted in Sanandaj, west of Iran, in 2019.

Sampling and research context

The sample size was estimated at 686 cases using the sample size formula with a confidence coefficient of 95% and an error rate of 4% ($\alpha=0.05$). Sampling was performed by a simple random method and in proportion to the number of students in each university from each field of study. The inclusion criteria were being a student of Sanandaj universities, willingness to participate in the study, and being Muslim. On the other hand, the students suffering from mental disorders

were excluded.

Instruments

A three-part questionnaire was used to collect the data. The first part consisted of demographic information (e.g., age, gender, number of family members, field of study, attended semesters, indigenouness, place of residence, maternal and paternal occupation and education level, income level, and membership in student center. The second part included a questionnaire with a score range of 0-200 (<100=weak and ≥ 100 =strong), investigating the students' attitude and practical commitment to prayer.

This questionnaire contains 50 items that are scored on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) in four subscales, namely effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life (14 items), attention to and practice of *mustahabbat* (12 items), commitment to perform prayer (12 items), and attentiveness during prayer (10 items.) The validity and reliability of this section of the questionnaire have been confirmed in Iranian studies (19).

The third part of the questionnaire examined interpersonal communication skills through a 19-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree=5 to strongly disagree=1). The total scores of this part ranged from 19-95 (<38=weak and ≥ 38 =good). The validity and reliability of this part of the questionnaire have been also confirmed in Iranian studies (14) (Appendix 1).

Data collection

Initially, the questionnaires were distributed among the participants at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. after obtaining their consent to participate in the study. Subsequently, the questionnaires were checked to ensure their completeness and were returned in case there were any incomplete items. A total amount of 15-20 min was needed to fill out the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed in SPSS software (version 21) using independent t-tests to investigate the relationship of attitude and practical commitment to prayer and interper-

sonal communication skills with demographic variables. Moreover, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationship of subscales of attitude and practical commitment to prayer with communication skills. In addition, logistic regression was used to investigate the most important predictors of interpersonal communication skills.

In logistic regression analysis, participants were coded as 0 or 1 in terms of interpersonal communication skills as a dependent variable. Accordingly, the code of 0 represented poor interpersonal communication skills with a total score of <38, and the code of 1 indicated good interpersonal communication skills with a total score of ≥ 38 .

Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences, Kurdistan, Iran (code no. IR.MUK.REC.1397/247). To collect the necessary information, the purpose of the study was explained to the students. Subsequently, the questionnaires were distributed among the participants after obtaining their consent to participate in the study and assuring them about the confidentiality of their information. However, they were informed about the possibility of study withdrawal at any research stage (Appendix 2).

Result

A total of 686 subjects participated in this study with the age range of 17-50. The mean age of the participants was calculated as 22.96 ± 6.03 years. Among this population, 53.5% of the participants were younger than 22 years old and 58% of them were female. Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of the students participating in this study. The mean score of the components of attitude and practical commitment to prayer and interpersonal communication skills are summarized in Table 2 in terms of demographic variables.

Based on the results of the study, the components of attitude and practical commitment to prayer were higher among

Table 1. Demographic information of participated students

Demographic variables		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	398	58
	Male	288	42
Place of residence	Urban	389	56.7
	Rural	297	43.3
Indigenusness	Native	377	55
	Nonnative	309	45
Member of student center	Yes	313	45.6
	No	373	54.4
Number of family members	<6	452	65.9
	≥6	234	34.1
Attended semesters	<4	410	59.8
	≥4	276	40.2
Maternal education	Illiterate	272	39.7
	Literate	414	60.3
Paternal education	Illiterate	161	23.5
	Literate	525	76.5
Paternal occupation	Unemployed	31	4.5
	Employed	655	95.5
Maternal occupation	Housewife	618	90.1
	Employed	68	9.9
Income level	Low to moderate	165	24.1
	Moderate to high	521	75.9
Age	<22	367	53.5
	≥22	319	46.5

Table 2. Mean score of components of attitude and commitment to prayer and interpersonal communication skills according to demographic information of participants

Demographic variables		Components of attitude and practical commitment to prayer and interpersonal communication skills				
		Attention to and practice of <i>mustahabbat</i> (Mean±SD)	Commitment to perform prayer (Mean±SD)	Attentiveness during prayer (Mean±SD)	Effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life (Mean±SD)	Interpersonal communication skills (Mean±SD)
Gender	Female	44.68 (±1.6)	48.57 (±6.49)	36.28 (±5.45)	59.66 (±7.10)	45.91 (±19.43)
	Male	44.09 (±7.13)	48.55 (±5.97)	36.23 (±5.50)	58.85 (±7.31)	47.74 (±19.30)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.26	0.97	0.91	0.14	0.22
Place of residence	Urban	44.69 (±6.40)	48.71 (±6.35)	36.67 (±5.46)	59.64 (±6.99)	48.23 (±19.86)
	Rural	44.08 (±7.24)	48.37 (±6.17)	35.73 (±5.44)	58.90 (±7.45)	44.64 (±18.58)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.25	0.48	0.02	0.17	0.01
Indigenusness	Native	44.44 (±6.74)	48.65 (±6.61)	36.45 (±5.60)	59.53 (±7.05)	47.40 (±20.46)
	Nonnative	44.41 (±6.85)	48.46 (±5.83)	36.03 (±5.29)	59.07 (±7.37)	45.80 (±17.97)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.95	0.69	0.32	0.40	0.27
Member of student center	Yes	44.59 (±6.70)	48.92 (±6.67)	36.47 (±5.88)	59.83 (±7.12)	48.86 (±20.78)
	No	44.30 (±6.85)	48.26 (±5.91)	36.08 (±5.09)	58.90 (±7.24)	44.85 (±17.95)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.57	0.17	0.35	0.09	0.00
Number of family members	6<	44.73 (±6.43)	48.05 (±6.36)	36.20 (±5.02)	59.11 (±7.46)	45.42 (±18.35)
	6≥	43.84 (±7.39)	49.55 (±5.97)	36.38 (±6.24)	59.73 (±6.64)	49.12 (±21.07)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.10	0.003	0.69	0.27	0.02
Attended semesters	4<	44.84 (±7.38)	49.50 (±6.97)	36.80 (±5.77)	60.38 (±7.28)	50.40 (±20.72)
	4≥	43.84 (±5.73)	47.18 (±4.74)	35.46 (±4.88)	57.75 (±6.78)	41.15 (±15.69)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.04	0.00	0.001	0.00	0.00
Maternal education	Illiterate	44.24 (±6.99)	47.63 (±5.98)	35.02 (±5.72)	58.63 (±7.18)	42.06 (±18.06)
	Literate	44.56 (±6.65)	49.17 (±6.39)	37.08 (±5.14)	59.78 (±7.17)	49.71 (±19.64)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.55	0.001	0.001	0.04	0.001
Paternal education	Illiterate	43.62 (±7.44)	47.62 (±5.71)	34.77 (±5.30)	58.18 (±6.90)	42.58 (±19.83)
	Literate	44.68 (±6.56)	48.85 (±6.41)	36.72 (±5.44)	59.67 (±7.25)	47.94 (±19.95)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.08	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.001
Paternal occupation	Unemployed	43.22 (±10.02)	50.58 (±4.84)	35.12 (±2.90)	60.70 (±3.63)	44.06 (±19.72)
	Employed	44.49 (±6.59)	48.47 (±6.32)	36.32 (±5.55)	59.25 (±7.32)	46.80 (±19.37)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.49	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.44
Maternal occupation	Housewife	44.39 (±6.87)	48.63 (±6.33)	36.23 (±5.66)	59.48 (±5)	46.83 (±19.53)
	Employed	44.79 (±5.96)	48.00 (±5.70)	36.58 (±3.18)	57.83 (±5)	45.35 (±18.02)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.64	0.43	0.42	0.03	0.55
Income level	Low to moderate	43.83 (±7.49)	47.56 (±6.04)	35.72 (±5.39)	58.93 (±6.77)	43.84 (±17.94)
	Moderate to high	44.62 (±6.54)	48.88 (±6.32)	36.43 (±5.48)	59.44 (±59.44)	47.58 (±19.75)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.19	0.01	0.14	0.42	0.02
Age	22<	43.65 (±7.39)	48.19 (±6.26)	35.75 (±5.02)	58.39 (±6.98)	45.49 (±19.54)
	22≥	45.33 (±5.89)	48.99 (±6.26)	36.85 (±5.89)	60.39 (±7.29)	48.05 (±19.14)
	<i>P-Value*</i>	0.00	0.09	0.01	0.00	0.8

*Independent-Samples T-Test

students who either had literate fathers or attended three semesters. Furthermore, interpersonal communication skills were higher among students with middle-income level, family members of ≥ 6 , and literate father or mother, as well as in those who were urban residents, had the membership of student centers, and attended three semesters.

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient test revealed that the components of attitude and practical commitment to prayer had a significant direct relationship with each other as well as with interpersonal communication skills ($P < 0.01$, Table 3). According to the findings of logistic regression analysis, the independent variables of maternal education,

indigenouness, membership in the student center, and attentiveness during prayer ($P < 0.05$), as well as the variables of attention to and practice of *mustahabbat*, commitment to perform prayer, and the effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life ($P < 0.01$) were the predictors of interpersonal communication skills.

Based on the results of the regression test, a one-unit increase in attention to and practice of *mustahabbat*, commitment to perform prayers, and the effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life increased the possibility of having interpersonal communication skills with the odds ratios of 1.6, 1.11, and 1.09, respectively (Table 4).

Table 3. Results of the correlation matrix of components of attitude and commitment to prayer and interpersonal communication skills

Variables	Attention to and practice of <i>mustahabbat</i>	Commitment to perform prayer	Attentiveness during prayer	Effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life	Interpersonal communication skills
Attention to and practice of <i>mustahabbat</i>	1				
Commitment to perform prayer	0.335**	1			
Attentiveness during prayer	0.270**	0.526**	1		
Effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life	0.473**	0.565**	0.638**	1	
Interpersonal communication skills	0.265**	0.579**	0.538**	0.517**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4. Logistic regression results of demographic variables and components of attitude and commitment to prayer in interpersonal communication skills

Predictors	B	S.E	Odds Ratio	CI 95%	Wald	P-value
Gender						
Male	0.43	0.19	1.54	1.05-2.26	4.88	>0.05
Female						
Place of residence						
Urban	-0.25	0.19	0.77	0.52-1.12	1.77	>0.05
Rural						
Indigenouness						
Native	0.62	0.31	1.86	1.007-3.43	3.93	<0.05
Nonnative						
Member of student center						
Yes	-0.70	0.31	0.49	0.26-0.91	4.96	<0.05
No						
Number of family members						
6<	0.09	0.21	1.10	0.73-1.66	0.22	>0.05
6 \geq						
Attended semesters						
4<	-0.35	0.20	0.69	0.46-1.04	3.08	>0.05
4 \geq						
Maternal education						
Illiterate	0.65	0.25	1.91	1.17-3.14	6.66	<0.05
Literate						

Table 4. Continued

Paternal education						
Illiterate	0.09	0.27	1.09	0.64-1.87	0.11	>0.05
Literate						
Paternal occupation						
Unemployed	0.71	0.45	2.03	0.83-4.99	2.42	>0.05
Employed						
Maternal occupation						
Housewife	0.01	0.31	1.01	0.54-1.89	0.003	>0.05
Employed						
Income level						
Low to moderate	-0.08	0.22	0.91	0.58-1.43	0.14	>0.05
Moderate to high						
Age						
<22	0.003	0.20	1.003	0.67-1.49	0.00	>0.05
≥22						
Attention to and practice of <i>mustahabbat</i>	0.06	0.01	1.06	1.02-1.09	11.47	<0.01
Commitment to perform prayer	0.10	0.02	1.11	1.06-1.15	25.5	<0.01
Attentiveness during prayer	0.05	0.02	1.06	1.10-1.11	5.5	<0.05
Effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life	0.09	0.02	1.09	1.05-1.14	19.21	<0.01

Variable Dependent: Interpersonal communication skills
 Model (likelihood ratio) Chi-square=274.72, df=16, P<0.01
 Cox & Snell R²=33%, Nagelkerke R²=44%
 Percent correctly classified=77.6%

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, no special research has been performed to investigate the relationship between prayer and communication skills, especially interpersonal communication skills among Iranian students. The results of this research showed that interpersonal communication skills were higher among students with literate mothers, compared to those among other students. In this study, the majority of students' parents were literate and civil servants.

It can be inferred that the higher level of interpersonal communication skills is related to the higher level of these skills in their parents. The results of a study performed in Sweden demonstrated an association between job security and the level of social trust; in this regard, job security increases the level of social trust (20). Therefore, with the increase in education level, social trust, and consequently interpersonal communications will be improved.

The results of the present study were indicative of a higher level of attitude and practical commitment to prayer among students with literate mothers. The reason for

such a relationship can be rooted in the fact that people with higher education levels explore the constitutional factors of prayer and are more experienced regarding prayer's effects on life.

In this regard, parents, especially more knowledgeable ones, are aware of the influence of prayer on an individual as it awakens a sense of responsibility, piety, God-fearing, and gratefulness, as well as reminding them of God and His court of justice. Moreover, such people are well informed that saying prayer would remove selfishness from one's heart. Prayer also detaches people from the material world and directs them toward the transcendental world, as the realm of spirituality and purity. They probably perceive praying as a practice having the property of self-influence and self-induction; therefore, they try to pass on all their related experiences and knowledge to their children.

The components of attitude and practical commitment to prayer and interpersonal skills were higher among students who attended three semesters. The underlying cause of this would be that as most students enter the university, they probably choose the virtual world in search of a sense of belonging and

as a comfortable and less stressful way. Gradually, as they become more dependent on cyberspace, they isolate themselves from real-world communication and develop fewer communication skills. Another possible reason can be related to the students' devotion of more time to the virtual world leading them to distance from fulfilling religious duties and change their attitudes toward these responsibilities. According to the results of the current study, there is a significant relationship between the attitude to prayer and practical commitment to it, as well as between these two components and interpersonal communication skills.

In a study conducted by Shahryaripour et al., entitled 'Relationship between attitude and practical commitment to prayer with acceptance of responsibility among graduate students of Semnan Universities', it was reported that the dimensions of attitude and practical commitment to prayer (i.e., effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life, commitment for saying prayers, attentiveness during prayer, and attention to and practice of *mustahabbat*) have a positive and significant relationship with responsibility. In the mentioned study, it was revealed that a more positive and better attitude and commitment toward the practice of prayer led to a greater responsibility and vice versa (19).

Mogharab et al. also reported that the majority of students not only achieved peace of mind after praying but also considered praying effective in resolving their mental and behavioral problems (7). According to the findings of these studies and those of ours, a positive attitude and commitment to prayer can create a balance in various aspects of individual and social life, be influential in the formation of personality (especially young people's personality), and prepare the youth for social engagement.

The results of the present study showed that maternal education, indigenouness, membership in the student center, attentiveness during prayer, and attention to and practice of *mustahabbat*, commitment for saying prayer, the effectiveness of prayer in individual and social life predict interpersonal communication

skills. Among these components, maternal education was the strongest predictor of interpersonal communication skills.

Similar studies indicate that there is a relationship between religious beliefs, such as belief in a supreme power, and social relations (21, 22). According to Erickson, stronger religious values and beliefs lead to more predictable behaviors, since individuals behave within the scope of certain rules. Therefore, they can be more trustworthy, and social relations will proceed more smoothly and cost-efficiently (23). Due to the emphasis of religious education on honesty and truthfulness in social relationships, students with a high practical attitude and commitment to prayer probably feel more comfortable and secure in their social relationships; as a result, they engage more social relationships and experience more trustworthy communications.

Conclusion

Although the cross-sectional nature of this study and the lack of follow-ups of the results were the limitations of our study, the findings revealed that the attitude to and practice of prayer play an important role in interpersonal communication skills. It was also showed that interpersonal communication was higher in students in lower semesters of the university rather than in those in higher semesters.

The findings of the present research highlight the importance of paying attention to prayer in predicting social relations, cultivating an attitude and practical commitment to prayer, identifying the reasons for its reduction, and explaining the students' needs to increase their attitude and practical commitment to prayer. Moreover, designing and implementing programs with the aim of creating a positive attitude towards prayer and its effective functions in students' lives would increase social relations and trust. On the other hand, such measures would play an essential role in increasing students' productivity, motivation, and ability, as well as developing physical, mental, and social health in them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict

of interest.

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