

## **A STUDY ON IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING AT WORKPLACE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Listening is the important aspect of communication that has been paid less attention by communication experts now a days, which is very useful in day to day life even at work place. Listening and hearing considered as same but it can be easily differentiated. Good listening involves deep understanding of speaker or sender message as well as emotions, which leads to best interpersonal relationship. Effective and good listening reduces conflict, increases trust and get knowledge how to inspire and motivate others at workplace or in any of interpersonal relationship. It is a habit which is mostly ignored by people because of illusion that they are good listeners. Effective listening at workplace improves formal and informal relationship with your co-workers and increase work efficiency. Good interpersonal relationship at workplace turns out to be a motivational factor for better work performance. In communication we are much bothered about language which is only one part of the communication but effective communication is impossible without effective listening. Type of listeners we come across in our day to day life. Passive listeners are not concerned about speaker intention, feelings and emotions. While active listener care about speaker emotions, feeling and therefore they possess patience levels, they ask question to clarify, they focus on speaker. It means that non verbal communication helps much in active listening. This paper deals with importance of effective listening at workplace. Purposive sampling under non-probability sampling technique applied. Survey method with questionnaire tool has been used for collecting data from 123 respondents of different educational organizations in Bhopal. Research concluded that lack of effective listening affects their formal and informal relationship at workplace. This research also suggested that effective listening helps them to understand work culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Effective Listening, Active Listeners, Passive Listeners, Interpersonal Relationship.

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening and Hearing are two different things in human communication. Listening is important aspect of communication. Hearing is just to hear while listening is to understand what you are hearing. Listening process includes hearing the speaker understand the message and communicate accordingly. This communication may be interpersonal or intrapersonal. Listening helps in building and maintaining the relationship between two or more people, at any place and in different types of relationships. We are not going to discuss more about listening and its different aspects as our focus in this paper is importance of effective listening at workplace. We are familiar with the terms working culture, office culture etc. Listening leads to communication which helps to develop culture at workplace, it may be positive or negative. Many organizations try to create a positive and healthy environment for better outcomes. In this paper we tried to analyze the importance of effective listening in an organization, with the help of basic objectives, effect of effective listening on interpersonal relationship and how effective is listening as an essential element of communication at workplace.

By listening, relationships can be enhanced through dialogue, as indicated by the phenomenological tradition of communication. Historically, the study of listening began with Paul Rankin's work in 1926, when listening was determined to be the most frequent mode of communication. However, it was not until the 1940's when more explicit attention was given to listening. At this time Nichols (1947) brought listening instruction to the forefront by establishing a listening emphasis course at the University of Minnesota. Since then, Nichols has been designated as the "father of the field of listening" due to his pioneering research in the topic.

Listening includes receiving information from various stimuli-both verbal and nonverbal, which includes perception, attention and processing. Listeners can function as senders and receivers of a message at the same time. Through listening and dialogue, human relationships are sustained and enhanced allowing communication to create connections to others. If people fail to listen in society; its individuals and organizations will fail. Wolvin and Coakley (1991) suggest that businesses and organizations desire effective communication. Listeners cannot be passive in their communication, as listening is the foundation of organizations.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study on "The Role of Communication and Listening in Leadership", by Kae Van Engen, (May 2012) shows that listening behaviors impact and influence leadership and the characteristics of listening impacts a leader's behavior. This study asked questions about listening and leadership, regarding respondent opinion of characteristics, perceptions and behaviors of listening and leadership. Study concluded that listening and leadership are intertwined and each is dependent upon the other. This study also suggested that listening requires both verbal and nonverbal responses.

Study on "The Importance of Listening in Communication", by Fatih Yavuz and Ozgur Celik, (2017) concluded that listening skills have little importance on speaking skills but there were some factors interfered in the data such as anxiety level of students, difficulty level of exams and subjective evaluation. In this study the topics chosen for listening and speaking activities were the same..

Sullivan, Amy Ogradnik (2011) Studied on "The Importance of Effective Listening Skills:

Implications for the Workplace and Dealing with Difficult people” revealed that both supervisors and supervised employees felt effective listening skills in the workplace was important, not specifically for supervisors, but for all employees, and training on such would be beneficial to all. Based on the results of this study, effective listening skills and training on such is very important for employee relations and the smooth functioning of the workplace.

Researcher Christa Arnold mentioned in research “Listening: The Forgotten Communication Skill” (2014) that People having different listening preferences, or a combination of preferences, would impact the type of training and listening skill building each person may need. The point to this profile is that we all listen differently.

A study on “Relational Skill Goals Influence: How People Report Talking about Problems” by Keaton. A. Shaughan, Graham Bodie & Robert Keteyian (2015) found that Listener effectiveness did not increase with a wider variety of listening skills; relational listening was the only goal that significantly affected response preference. This study moves work on supportive listening toward a model that theorizes the reciprocal nature of supportive encounters: Listening is interactive. This study also aims to advise practice, providing suggestions for how one should approach a demanding situation as a listener.

Study on “Factors Affecting Listening Skills” by Dr. Omer Kutlu and Dr. Ashhan Aslanoglu (2009) suggested that the two variables that have the most significant effects on students’ listening comprehension skills are “the number of the books at home” and “the number of books read within one month. Integrating interviews with teachers, students and parents into the forthcoming research may bring about not only more comprehensive results, but also more appropriate decisions on the listening skill.

Study Can We Teach Effective Listening? An Exploratory Study by Donell Caspersz and Ania Stasinska (2015) suggested that Effective listening has to be consciously taught, Effective listening has to be taught experientially, Teaching effective listening has to be ‘planned’.

Shinya Kubota, Norio Mishima and Shoji Nagata found in their research on A Study of The Effects of Active Listening on Listening Attitudes of Middle managers (2004) that Listening attitude and listening skills subscales increased significantly after training.

Robert Bostrom (2006) found in his study on “Memory, Cognitive Processing and the process of Listening: A Reply To Thomas and Levine” that Thomas and Levine (1994) explored the “listening” construct, examining listening from both a cognitive and behavioral point of view.

Hilal Kazu and Demet Demiralp (2017) in their study “Comparison of Critical Listening Proficiency of Teacher Candidates in Terms of Several Variables” revealed that the teacher candidates generally have a high level of critical listening proficiency. Study on The Art of Listening in an Educational Perspective by Kent Adelman (2012) shows that The Art of Listening is mainly influenced by listening research in the USA.

The main conclusion is that with an educational approach and an alternative theoretical framework it is possible to work with an expanding and including perspective in listening research and listening education. Study on “Listening Treatment in The Basic Communication Course Text” by Laura A Janusik and Andrew D Wolvin finds that the basic course texts affirm that the amount of space allotted for listening instruction is insufficient, and the quality of the content included does not reflect current listening scholarship.

## OBJECTIVES

- To examine that how listening skills can affect your interpersonal relationship at workplace.
- To find out the factors affecting effective listening at workplace.
- To examine the formal and informal communication pattern between employees at workplace.
- To analyze employees perception towards effective listening at workplace.

## METHODOLOGY

Descriptive Research Design is used for this study. The sampling technique used for this study was Purposive Sampling under Non-Probability Sampling Technique. The respondent chosen were according to the purpose of the study. This technique was used

to get the right data from the interested audience and reduce the causality from respondents' side. The planned sample framework was 150 but the researchers got back 123 questionnaires. The loss of 27 respondents was expected and the sample frame was designed keeping in mind this condition. The tool for collecting the data for the study was survey using questionnaire. The questionnaire has 14 questions excluding demographic details. Demography includes age, gender, education and occupation of the respondents. Questions are related to effective listening skills, factors affecting listening, respondent relation with their co-workers and how respondents perceive their coworkers listening skill. This study includes different educational institutions of Bhopal. Respondents participated in this research are working employee of an organization who deals with work culture at workplace.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

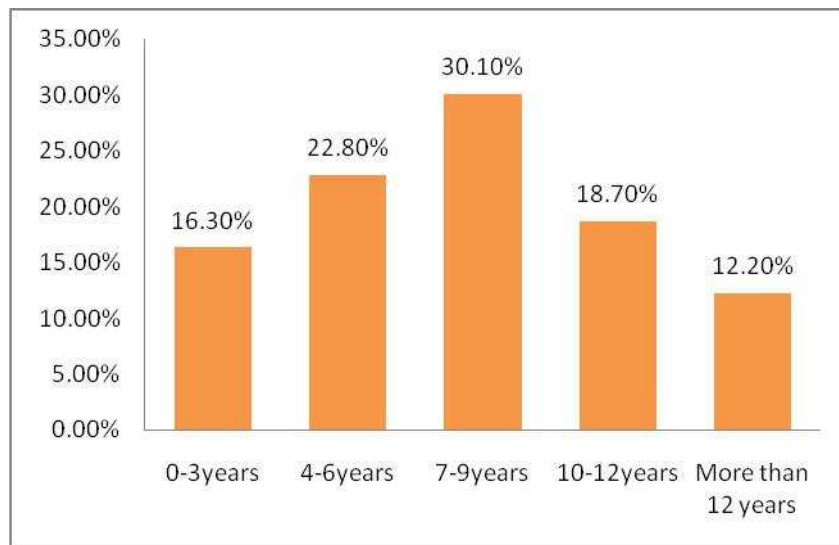
Gender			Age			Education		
	F.	%		F.	%		F.	%
Female	42	34.1	20-30	46	37.4	12TH	4	3.3
Male	81	65.9	31-40	46	37.4	Graduate	45	36.6
			41-50	23	18.7	Post Graduate	46	37.4
			51-60	8	6.5	Above PG	28	22.8
Total	123	100.0	Total	123	100.0	Total		100.0

F= Frequency

Table shows the demographic details of the respondent participated in this research. According to it 65.9% male and 34.1% female respondents took part in this research. This shows that male respondents were more as

compared to female respondents. Majority and equal 37.4% of the respondent belongs to the age group of 20-30 and 31-40. Majority 37.4% respondents participated in this research are studied up to post graduate.

**TIME DURATION - WORKING WITH THE ORGANIZATION**

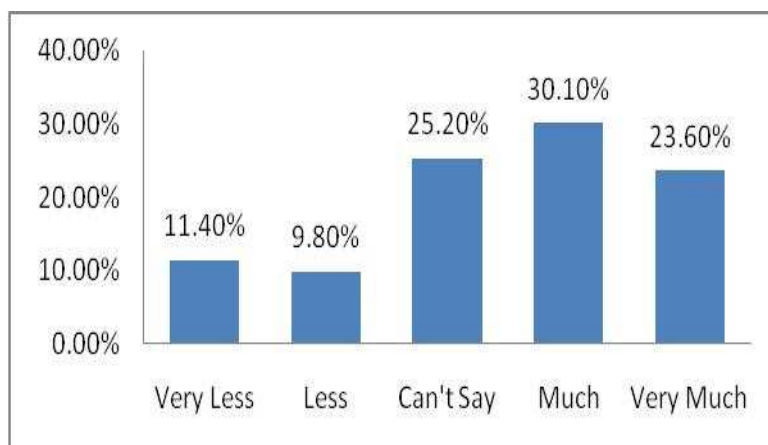


	F.	%
0-3 YEARS	20	16.3
4-6 YEARS	28	22.8
7-9 YEARS	37	30.1
10-12 YEARS	23	18.7
MORE THAN 12 YEARS	15	12.2
Total	123	100.0

Out of all, 30.1% respondents are working with the same organization from 7-9 years. Only 12.2% respondents are working in the same organization from more than 12 years. 16.3% respondents are seems to be fresher, as they are working with organization from 0-3 years. Research is based on importance of effective

listening at work place, therefore person working in same organization can easily understand and explain the importance of effective listening. People who work in same organization time deals differently with problem related to lacking of effective listening and fresher deals it with differently.

**RESPONDENTS POSSESS EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**



	F.	%
Very Less	14	11.4
Less	12	9.8
Can't Say	31	25.2
Much	37	30.1
Very Much	29	23.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table shows that 30.1% of total 123 respondents feel that they possess much effective listening skills. Whereas only 23.6% respondents said that they possess effective listening skills very much. 11.4% respondents

accepted that they possess very less effective listening skills. 25.2% respondents have no opinion whether they possess effective listening skills or not.

**RESPONSE WHILE LISTENING TO SPEAKER+**

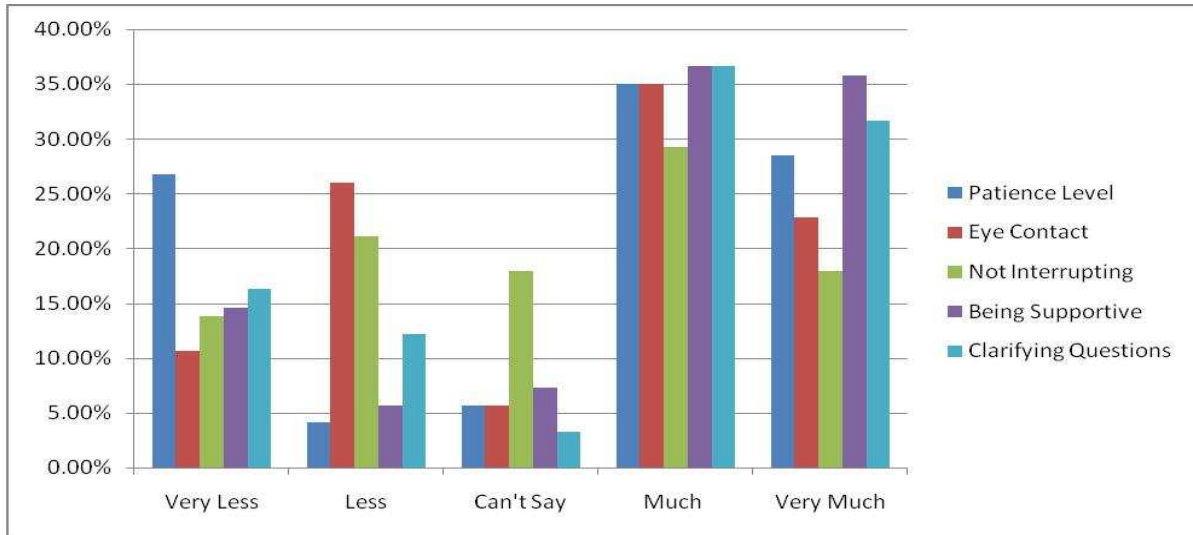
	Patience Level		Eye Contact		Not Interrupting		Being Supportive		Ask Questions	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Very Less	33	26.8	13	10.6	17	13.8	18	14.6	20	16.3
Less	5	4.1	32	26.0	26	21.1	7	5.7	15	12.2
Can't Say	7	5.7	7	5.7	22	17.9	9	7.3	4	3.3
Much	43	35.0	43	35.0	36	29.3	45	36.6	45	36.6
Very Much	35	28.5	28	22.8	22	17.9	44	35.8	39	31.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**PATIENCE LEVEL:** Table shows that 35.0% respondent possess much and 28.5% very much patience level while listening to a speaker. Only 4.1% accepted that they follow less patience level, the important element of listening. 26.8% follow very less. It means that they are less patient during listening which turns them into passive listeners.

only 22.8% admitted that they do an eye contact very much. 10.6% respondents accepted that they do an eye contact very less with the speaker.

**EYE CONTACT:** 35.0% respondent accepted that they prefer to do an eye contact with speaker during listening most (much) of the time. While

**NOT INTERRUPTING:** Majority 29.3% of respondent feels that they try not to interrupt much to speaker which is essential for completing communication process. 17.9% respondent admitted that they do not interrupt while listening to a speaker so that he or she can communicate without disturbance.

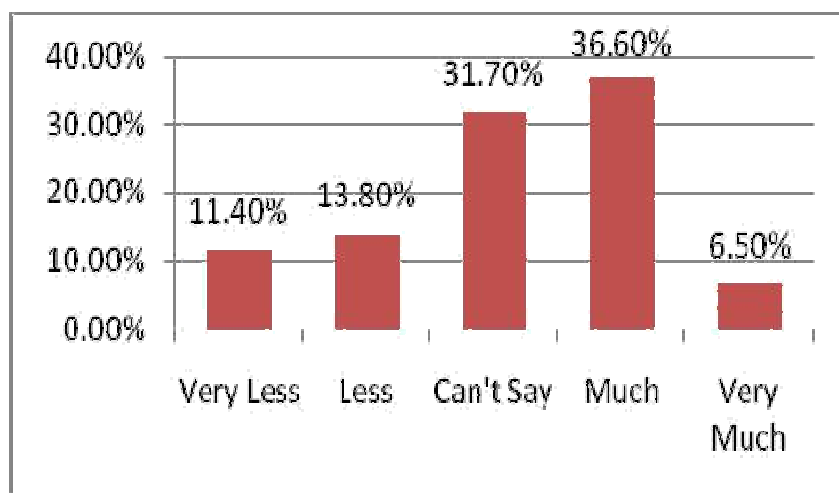


**BEING SUPPORTIVE:** 36.6% respondent feels that they are much supportive and 35.85 feels that they are very much supportive during listening to a speaker. But 14.6% feels that they are very less supportive while listening to a speaker. Only 7.3% respondent didn't give any opinion about it. It means that majority of the respondents admitted that they are supportive with the speaker.

**ASKING QUESTION TO CLARIFY:** 36.6% respondent accepted that they ask much questions to clarify followed by 31.7% very much while listening to a speaker. 16.3% respondent admitted that they ask very less questions to clarify while listening to a speaker. Respondents are very much aware about effective listening elements of being supportive and clarifying questions.

**CO-WORKER POSSESS EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**

	F.	%
Very Less	14	11.4
Less	17	13.8
Can't Say	39	31.7
Much	45	36.6
Very Much	8	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

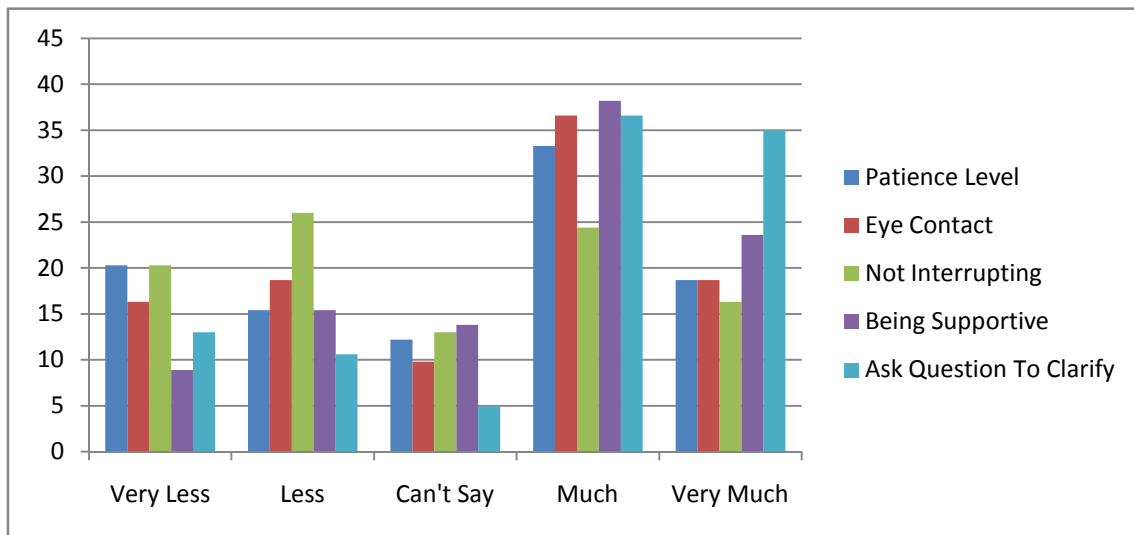


According to data analyzed for this question only 6.5% respondent feels that their co-worker possesses effective listening skill very much. 36.6% respondents show confidence about

their co-worker. The major portion 31.7% respondents can't say about their co-workers or feel hesitation to give opinion.

**RESPONSE ABOUT CO-WORKER WHILE LISTENING TO A SPEAKER**

	Patience Level		Eye Contact		Not Interrupting		Being Supportive		Asking Questions	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Very Less	25	20.3	20	16.3	25	20.3	11	8.9	16	13.0
Less	19	15.4	23	18.7	32	26.0	19	15.4	13	10.6
Can't Say	15	12.2	12	9.8	16	13.0	17	13.8	6	4.9
Much	41	33.3	45	36.6	30	24.4	47	38.2	45	36.6
Very Much	23	18.7	23	18.7	20	16.3	29	23.6	43	35.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**PATIENCE LEVEL:** When respondents has been asked about their co-workers effective listening skill only 18.7% respondents admitted that their co-workers have very much and 33.3% respondents co-workers have much patience level.

**EYE CONTACT:** 36.6% respondents answered that their co-worker follows to do an eye contact much while listening to a speaker and 18.7% said very much. While only 16.3% accepted that their co-worker does very less eye contact while listening to a speaker.

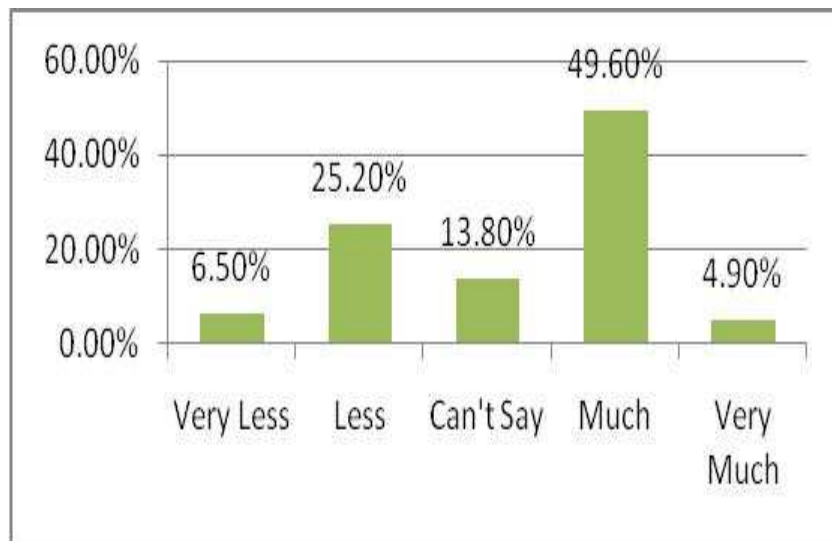
**NOT INTERRUPTING:** Majority of respondents i.e. 26% confirmed that, their co-worker interrupt less while listening to speaker.

**BEING SUPPORTIVE:** 38.2% respondent confirmed that their co-worker are much supportive, which is good sign for interpersonal relationship at workplace. While only 8.9% accepted that their co-workers are very less supportive..

**ASK QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY:** 36.6% of respondent said that their co-worker ask much questions and 35% ask very much while listening to speaker and only 13% are least interested in asking questions.



**YOURSELF AS A DIFFICULT PERSON TO COMMUNICATE AT WORKPLACE**



	F.	%
Very Less	8	6.5
Less	31	25.2
Can't Say	17	13.8
Much	61	49.6
Very Much	6	4.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As data shows that majority 49.6% respondents confirmed that they are difficult person to communicate at workplace and only 6.5%

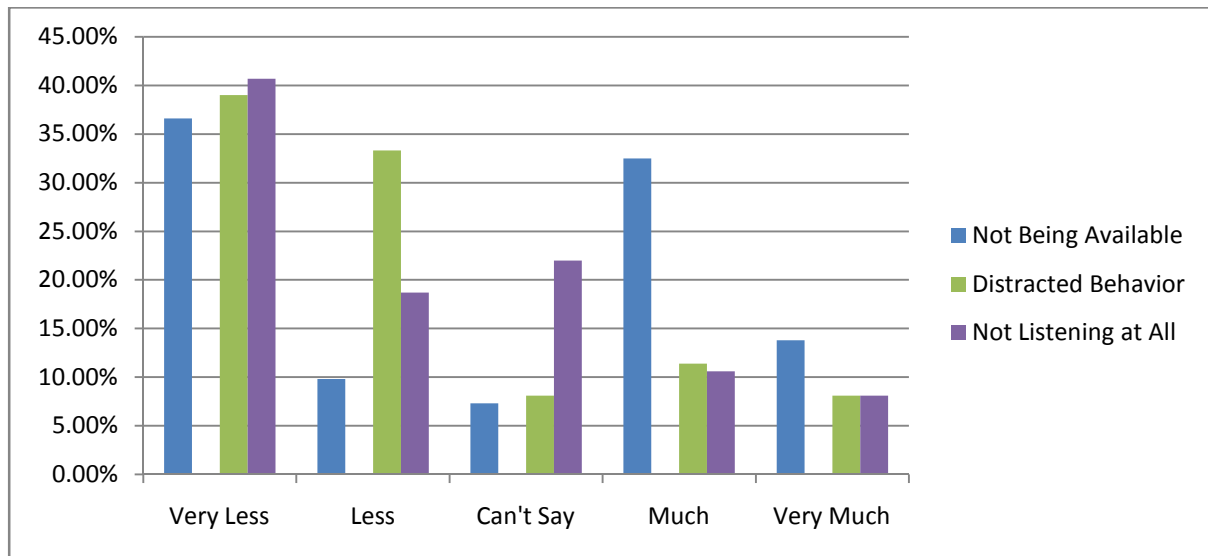
respondents believe that they are easily approachable to communicate at workplace.

**FACTORS THAT FIND YOURSELF AS A DIFFICULT PERSON TO COMMUNICATE**

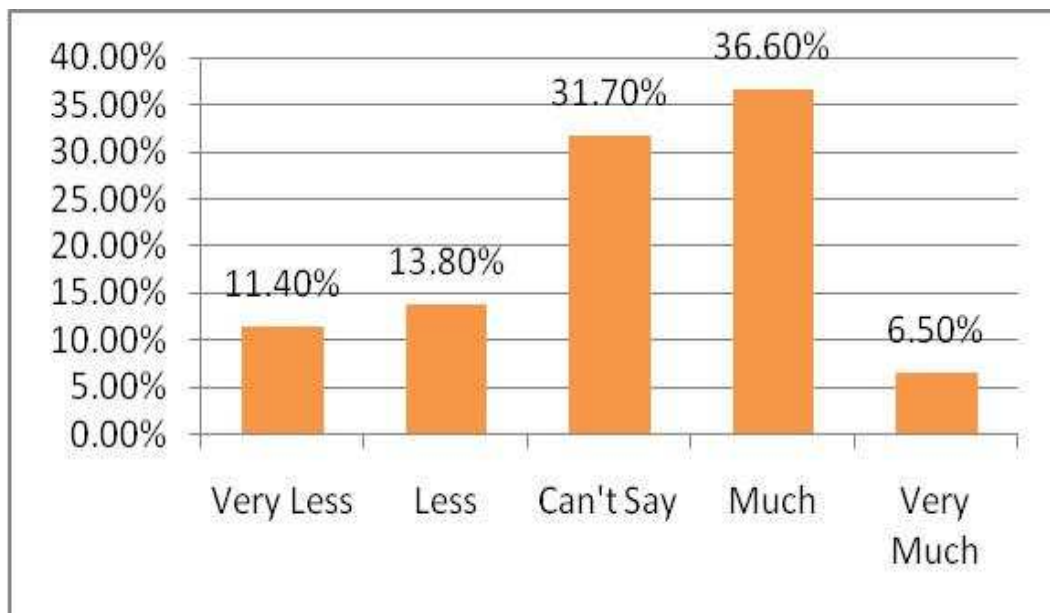
	Not Being Available		Distracted Behavior		Not Listening At all	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Very Less	45	36.6	48	39.0	50	40.7
Less	12	9.8	41	33.3	23	18.7
Can't Say	9	7.3	10	8.1	27	22.0
Much	40	32.5	14	11.4	13	10.6
Very Much	17	13.8	10	8.1	10	8.1

Table shows that 36.6% respondents admitted that they are being available. 39.0% respondent accepted that they have very less distracted behavior. 40.7% respondents feel very less

about not listening at all. This table shows that majority of respondents feels that they are not difficult person at their workplace.



**CO-WORKER IS DIFFICULT PERSON TO COMMUNICATE**



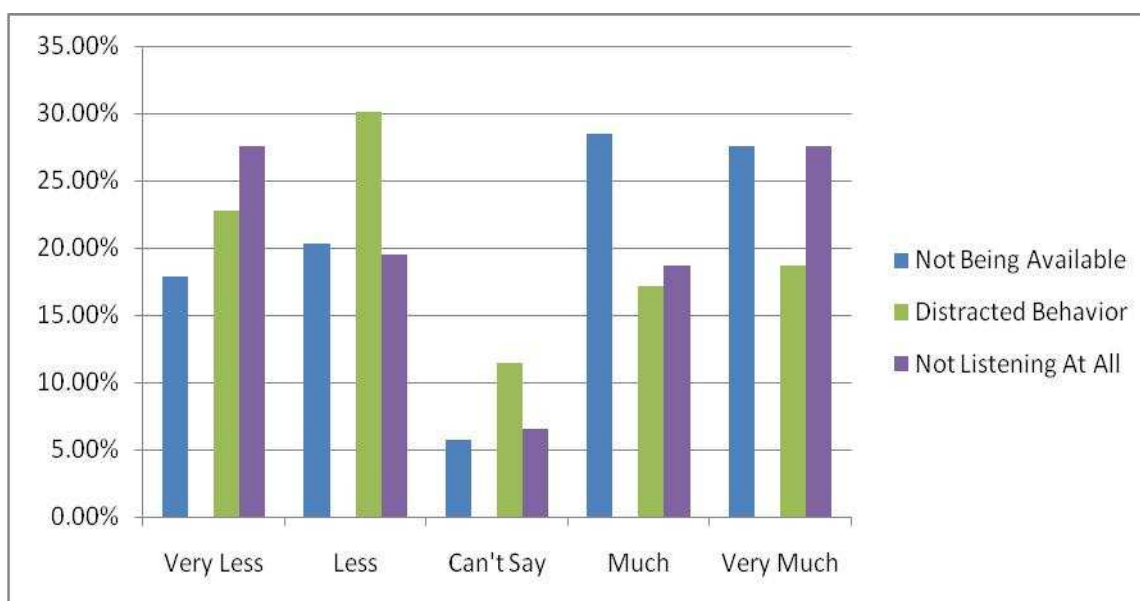
	F.	%
Very Less	14	11.4
Less	17	13.8
Can't Say	39	31.7
Much	45	36.6
Very Much	8	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table shows that majority of respondent (36.6%) feels that their co-workers are much difficult person to communicate at workplace. Only 11.4% respondents confirmed that their

co-workers are very less difficult person to communicate. 31.7% respondents have not given any opinion regarding this.

### FACTORS THAT FIND CO-WORKER IS DIFFICULT PERSON TO COMMUNICATE

	Not Being Available		Distracted Behavior		Not Listening At all	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Very Less	22	17.9	28	22.8	34	27.6
Less	25	20.3	37	30.1	24	19.5
Can't Say	7	5.7	14	11.4	8	6.5
Much	35	28.5	21	17.1	23	18.7
Very Much	34	27.6	23	18.7	34	27.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>



According to table, data reveals that 27.6% respondents feel that their co-workers are difficult person to communicate because they are unavailable very much. 30.1% respondent

feels that their co-workers have less distracted behavior. 27.6% of respondents believe that their co-worker do not listen them at all and same number of respondent feels opposite.

### EFFECTIVE LISTENING HELPS IN UNDERSTANDING WORK CULTURE

	F.	%
Very Less	1	0.8
Less	7	5.7
Can't Say	8	6.5
Much	35	28.5
Very Much	72	58.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This table shows that majority 58.5% respondents accepted that effective listening skill helps in understanding work culture very

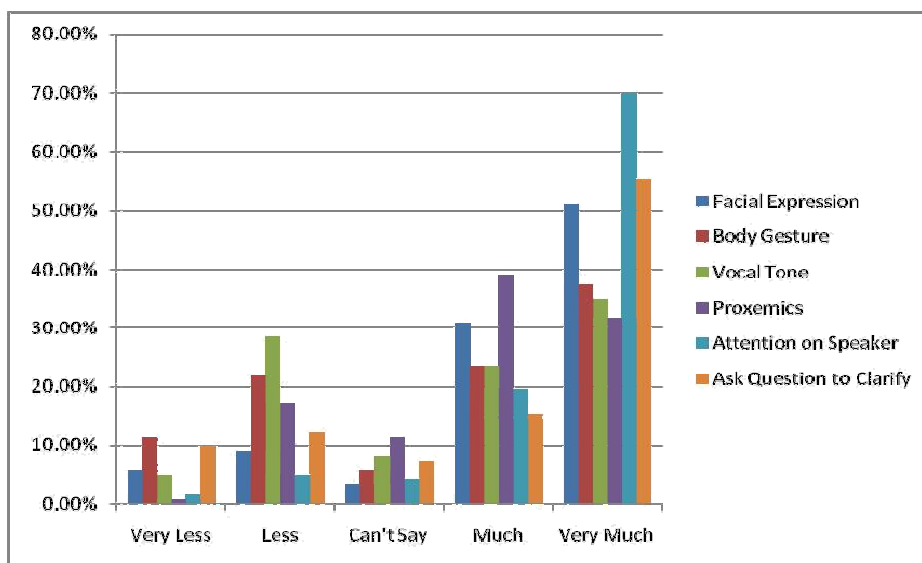
much. 6.5% respondents have not given any opinion in this matter. Only 0.8% respondents of total 123 are not agreed with this statement.

**IMPORTANCE OF ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING**

	Facial Expression (%)	Body Gesture (%)	Vocal Tone (%)	Proxemics (%)	Attention on Speaker (%)	Asking Questions (%)
Very Less	5.7	11.4	4.9	0.8	1.6	9.8
Less	8.9	22.0	28.5	17.1	4.9	12.2
Can't Say	3.3	5.7	8.1	11.4	4.1	7.3
Much	30.9	23.6	23.6	39.0	19.5	15.4
Very Much	51.2	37.4	35.0	31.7	69.9	55.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to table, when researcher asked about importance of various elements of effective listening majority 51.2% respondents are completely agreed that facial expressions is important in effective listening. When ask about the importance of body gesture 37.4% respondent agreed with this statement. On the

vocal tone element 35% respondent feels that vocal tone is very much important for effective listening. 39% respondents give much importance to proxemics. Respondents give major importance to attention on speaker i.e. 69.9% and asking question i.e. 55.3% as an important element for effective listening.

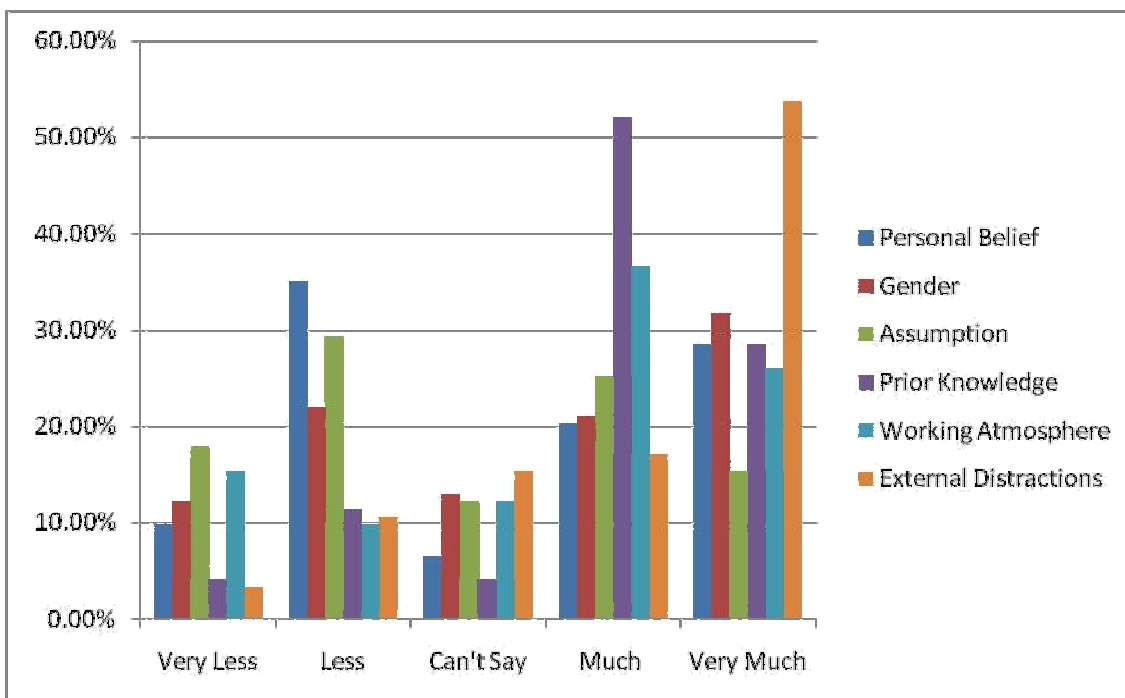


**FACTORS AFFECTING LISTENING PROCESS**

	Personal Beliefs (%)	Gender (%)	Assumption (%)	Prior Knowledge (%)	Working Atmosphere (%)	External Distractions (%)
Very Less	9.8	12.2	17.9	4.1	15.4	3.3
Less	35.0	22.0	29.3	11.4	9.8	10.6
Can't Say	6.5	13.0	12.2	4.1	12.2	15.4
Much	20.3	21.1	25.2	52.0	36.6	17.1
Very Much	28.5	31.7	15.4	28.5	26.0	53.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to table data that shows 53.7% respondents believes that external distraction is the factor which affects listening process very much. 52.0% respondents believe prior knowledge affects listening process much, whereas 36.6% respondents believe that working atmosphere affects the listening

process. 31.7% respondents accepted that gender is the factor which affects listening process very much. 29.3% give less attention to assumptions that affect listening process. If we talk about personal beliefs majority 35% respondents said that this factor is less important which affects listening process.

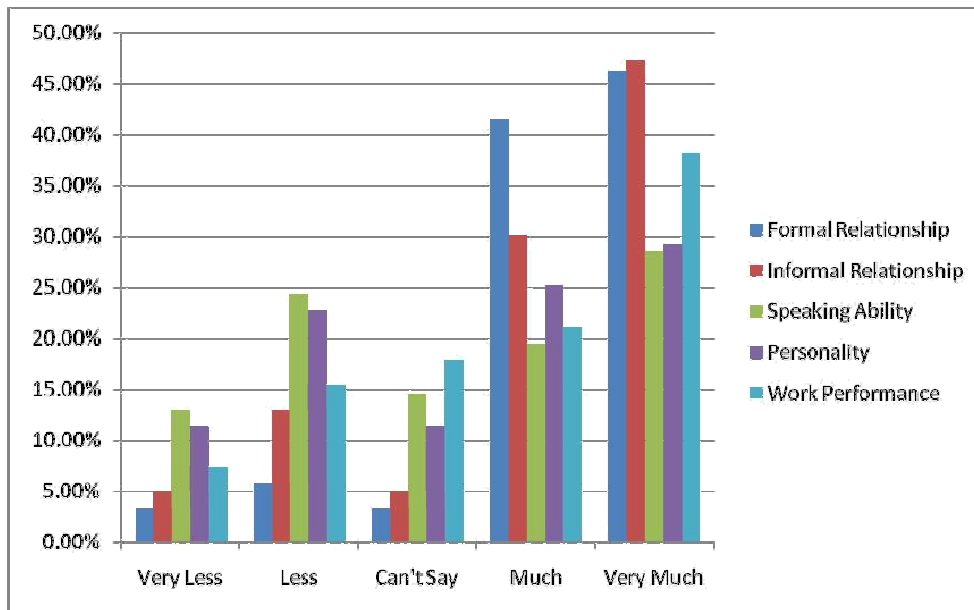


**LACKING OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING AND ITS EFFECTS**

	Formal Relationship (%)	Informal Relationship (%)	Speaking Ability (%)	Personality (%)	Work Performance (%)
Very Less	3.3	4.9	13.0	11.4	7.3
Less	5.7	13.0	24.4	22.8	15.4
Can't say	3.3	4.9	14.6	11.4	17.9
Much	41.5	30.1	19.5	25.2	21.1
Very Much	46.3	47.2	28.5	29.3	38.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Lacking of effective listening affect both type of relationship very much, formal and informal, 46.3% and 47.2% respectively. Speaking ability i.e. 28.5% and personality i.e. 29.3% are very

much affected due to lack of effective listening followed by work performance i.e. 38.2% very much.



**EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS**

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Can Not Say	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	There is difference between hearing and Listening.	3.3%	4.1%	6.5%	28.5%	57.7%
2.	Nowadays people forget about the power of good listening.	4.1%	9.8%	10.6%	34.1%	41.5%
3.	Lack of listening created trouble in your relationships at workplace.	12.2%	11.4%	9.8%	35.8	30.9%
4.	Effective listening skills are dire need for interpersonal relationship.	1.6%	3.3%	7.3%	30.9%	56.9%
5.	For improving communication skill listening skill should be strong.	3.3%	13.0%	4.1%	41.5%	38.2%
6.	Your facial expressions, body gesture shows your listening skills.	12.2%	30.9%	5.7%	23.6%	27.6%
7.	Effective listening skills are very important for healthy communication at workplace.	5.7%	4.1%	5.7%	36.6%	48.0%
8.	Listening skills boost your confidence at workplace.	17.1%	23.6%	8.9%	17.9%	32.5%
9.	People respect those persons who are good listeners.	12.2%	4.9%	13.0%	28.5%	41.5%

Table shows that 57.7% respondents are strongly agree that there is difference between hearing and listening and only 3.3% respondents are strongly disagree over this. 41.5% of respondents participated in this

research strongly accepted that nowadays people forget about power of effective listening. Majority 35.8% respondents agreed that lack of listening creates trouble in relationship at workplace. 56.9% respondents of total 123 are

strongly agreed on statement that effective listening is dire need for interpersonal relationship. 41.5% of respondents agree that effective listening skill improves communication skill. 30.9% of respondents are disagreeing with the statement that facial expressions and body gestures shows your listening skills. 48.0% respondents are strongly agreed that effective listening leads to healthy communication. 32.5% respondents strongly believe that listening skills boost your confidence at workplace. 41.5% respondents are strongly agreed with the statement that people respect to good listeners.

## CONCLUSION

This research on importance of effective listening at workplace concluded that people are strongly agree that lacking of effective listening skills affects their interpersonal relationship either formal or informal at workplace. Not only their interpersonal relationship but it also affects their personality. They admitted in this research that if we possess effective listening skill we can better understand the work culture at workplace. Respondent participated in this research are aware that hearing and listening are two different things and effective listening is very important for good communication skills, but factors like personal beliefs, prior knowledge, external distraction, even gender affects their listening process to some extent. They know the important elements of effective listening like facial expression, body gesture, vocal tone, proxemics, focusing attention on speaker and asking questions to clarify but respondents give much importance to only two elements that is focusing attention on speaker and asking question to clear their doubts. Overall, respondents involved in this research process admitted that effective listening is an important skill to build relationship and create good atmosphere at workplace.

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