

Body Language in Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Body language is a form of non-verbal communication which encompasses gestures, eye movements, facial expressions, and body posture. Body language in the workplace has not been given enough regard as it is one of the most important factors to communicate in the organisation. This literature review aims at seeing the importance of body language at the workplace. It was seen that body language plays a pivotal role in having successful conversations at the workplace. Not only that, it was also seen that body language is important in all spheres of life, for communication. Culture was observed to have a major role in determining the type of body language to be implemented.

Keywords: *Body language, Workplace*

Communication is just the act of transferring information from one place, person, or group to a different. Spoken or Verbal Communication, which incorporates face-to-face, telephone, radio or television, and other media.

Non-Verbal Communication, covering visual communication, gestures, how we dress or act, where we stand, and even our scent. There are many subtle ways in which we communicate (perhaps even unintentionally) with others. For example, the tone of voice can give clues to mood or spirit, whilst hand signals or gestures can increase a spoken message.

Body language may be a sort of non-verbal communication during which physical behaviours, as against words, are wont to express or convey some information. Such behaviours include facial expressions, body postures, gestures, eye movement, touch, and the use of space around the individual.

When we look around, we notice that most of our communication is carried smoothly through the usage of body language. On scientific analysis, it's been found that the various aspects of communication comprise 55% bodily movements and gestures, 38% vocal tone, and only 7% words or verbal communication. It is thus clear that about 93% of communication is nonverbal, as repeatedly, words are inadequate. This shows that the correct use of body language serves as an effective nonverbal communication tool to

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convince fellow-workers at the workplace, as well as family and friends, eventually leading to overall organizational success through self-development.

Body language in the workplace is an increasingly hot discussion topic nowadays. The famous Australian visual communication expert, Allan Pease has stated that 0-80% of what's communicated is through visual communication (Pease,2017). It has also been found through various studies that a worker can predict his performance even before he finishes presenting about a particular topic- this is done through body language- if the worker does not seem to have any eye contact, is slouching or seems uncomfortable, he would not be able to catch anyone's attention. In other words, knowing the basics of body language in today's day and age is as important as having your degree of education.

Presently, a lot of organizations have a complete body language check of a new employee before recruiting him or her. If an employee projects any negative or nervous behaviour, he is instantly rejected.

Eye contact are some things that a lot of people got to work on, because it might not necessarily come naturally. The ability to look directly at the person who is speaking to you conveys your confidence and attention. The eyes can also tell about the individual's feeling through the gaze in their eyes, the pupil dilation, and blinking.

Usually, looking at someone's face can tell us how they are feeling at a particular moment, whether they are happy, sad, nervous, scared, or angry, without them saying a word. Facial expressions are automatic, the individuals are not able to control their immediate expressions when faced with a specific situation.

Hand gestures are another sort of visual communication which will be available in different extremes. Some people fidget tons, either with just their hands, their hair, or whatever they could be holding like their phone or a pen. This can be seen as a weakness and a scarcity of confidence. However, people can re-evaluate the highest with their hand gestures, flailing, and waving about when talking. This can be annoying and distracting, instead of letting others specialise in what you're actually saying.

Posture may be a key component to visual communication that a lot of people don't realise until they're called out thereon. There's a bent to slump your shoulders when tired or when you're lacking confidence. This, however, can give others the impression that you're lazy, unhappy together with your job, or overly insecure. Contrarily, if you stand straight and tall you encounter as confident and sure of yourself.

The way you speak, the way you act and therefore the way you progress around are often vital to achieve your presentation. Here you will find some useful pieces of advice and links to bear in mind during the presentation. In general, one needs to sound respectful, confident, courteous, and sincere. However, the precise tone and degree of ritual are going to be dictated by your organizational role and your relationship to your audience.

Generally, you won't be able to get a complete picture of what others think and feel based on their body language alone. When you put visual communication within the context of their words, you'll get tons more information than you'd when considering either sort of communication alone. A mastery over the topic will avoid unsuccessful interventions like misleading someone during a crucial discussion through negative visual communication,

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failing a deal thanks to lack of understanding of clients' visual communication thus being unable to deliver, bridging the gap between words and expressions thus ensuring clear communication or uncovering an underlying message in some cases.

While body language can indicate an employee's feelings, a misinterpretation of the body language can lead to misunderstanding and friction. This may become more of a problem during a diverse workplace where cultural differences make visual communication harder to read. If an employee's body language appears to show frustration, dishonesty, boredom, or similar negative feelings, one should not create a judgement about the employee immediately.

Arms and legs of individuals can also play a role in telling others what they are thinking to some extent. Crossed arms might indicate that a private feels defensive, self-protective, or closed-off. Standing with hands placed on the hips are often a sign that an individual is prepared and on top of things, or it also can possibly be a symbol of aggressiveness. Clasping the hands behind the rear might indicate that an individual is feeling bored, anxious, or maybe angry. Rapidly tapping fingers or fidgeting are often a symbol that an individual is bored, impatient, or frustrated. Crossed legs can indicate that an individual is feeling closed off or in need of privacy.

Mirroring may be a social phenomenon where an individual mimics the visual communication of the person they're in conversation with. For example, you might have observed that when two people are deeply engrossed in a conversation, one of them leaning inwards might lead to in the other one doing the same thing. Mirroring occurs subconsciously when two people are in tune and in sync with one another. Thus, when you see that someone is mirroring your actions, it means that they are in sync with you, that they are attentive, and are interested in the conversation. Mirroring occurs unconsciously, so, you can make use of it on a conscious level to create rapport with someone you are talking to.

There are various aspects that showcase how we present ourselves and reveal something about our personality. In all societies, clothing, jewellery, and emblems talk about an individual's status and group membership. The hairstyle also tells us about an individual's personality, like one with unkempt, untidy, and wavy hair is considered to be unprofessional, or someone who is not serious about the job. A person's personality is particularly related to the face then its appearance is manipulated to arbitrate something about the person. Looking at the eyes is more common than the opposite parts of the face. An extremely important point to keep in mind is the extent of cultural differences while interpreting body language. A particular hand gesture in a country can mean something and the same hand gesture can mean an offensive term in another country. Similar is the case with arm signals, leg positioning, and even nodding of the head.

The physical distance, also known as proxemics, introduced by Edward T. Hall, is the study of measurable distances between people as they interact with one another. He also came up with the four distinct zones in which people operate: the intimate distance, the personal distance, the social distance, and the public distance. He said that these distances determine how far the individuals should stand to one- another while conversing according to the situation they are placed in. It was also mentioned that if a person crosses the other's proximal space, he would start feeling uncomfortable and this may even reflect in their body language through lack of eye contact, or stepping backward.

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It is important to notice that like other sorts of visual communication, proximity range varies with culture. Hall suggested that "physical contact between two people are often perfectly correct in one culture, and an absolute taboo in another". In Latin, people that could also be complete strangers may engage in very close contact. They often greet each other by kissing on the cheeks. Norths, on the opposite hand, like better to greet. While they need made some physical contact with the shaking of the hand, they still maintain a particular amount of physical space between the opposite person.

Few important components of the body language are Haptics and Oculistics.

Haptics involve touching while communicating with the other person, such as, handshakes, high fives, brushing up against someone, etc. The amount of touching that occurs is also culturally dependent. Research shows that people can usually predict distinct emotions of a person by merely watching communications via touch. Heslin outlined 5 main haptic categories: functional (expresses task orientation), social (expresses ritual interaction), friendship (expresses distinctive relationship), love (expresses emotional attachment) and sexual (expresses sexual intent).

Oculistics focuses on the eye movement, the eye behaviour. Gaze and other eye related non-verbal communication. Like haptics, oculistics also depends upon the culture where the communication is taking place.

Chronemics also play a huge role in non-verbal communication. Chronemics focuses on the role of time in communication. The way that a private would perceive and value time, structure our time and react to time may be a powerful communication tool, and helps set the stage for the communication process.

Understanding body language is a simple, but extremely vast process and is filled with intense observations. Since this field is so extensive and wide, there is a separate field devoted to understanding the non-verbal language, known as kinesics.

Slight shifts in stance and changes in countenance tend to happen naturally over the course of a conversation or social interaction. Though, someone with a consistently erect posture or fixed expression could also be fixing tons of effort to stay their true emotions from showing.

The aim of this research is to find the influence of body language at the workplace. It is a secondary research that is being conducted to evaluate the results of various studies that have priorly taken place to reach a conclusion regarding the same.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pawan Raj (2019), Body Language and its Understanding. This research aimed at understanding how well students of Journalism and Mass Communication understands body language from Madhu Bala Institute of Communication and Electronic Media. Through online surveys, Raj conducted the research wherein the age of the population was between 18-25 years. A total of 100 individuals were surveyed. The subjects of the experiment were presented with online questionnaires, each containing 20 questions testing the subjects' knowledge about body language and non-verbal behaviour on a general level. Upon analysis, it was found that only a few people understood the true meaning of body language, and were oblivious of the frequent recurrence of the non-verbal language taking place in the daily life. The researcher concluded that body language is a soft skill and must be practiced by everyone in their day-to-day lives.

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Britton Bailey (2018), *The Importance of Nonverbal Communication in Business and How Professors at the University of North Georgia Train Students on the Subject*. This study focuses on what is taught on nonverbal communication in post-secondary education environments to keep satisfying the expectations of business owners. This experiment was conducted on 50 people from University of North Georgia (UNG) business administration, faculty, and staff from the five campuses making up UNG. The participants received a 12-question self-report questionnaire. Upon being asked about the importance of body language in the workplace, 28% participants responded that body language was “extremely important”. Twenty-seven 54% felt body language was “very important”, 10% believed body language was only “moderately important”, 36% responded body language was “slightly important”, and 1 responded body language was “not important at all”. It was also found that no single aspect of non-verbal communication was to be paid attention to, instead, more emphasis should be paid on enhancing all parts of body language.

Sona Ahuja (2018), *An Experimental Study of Non-Verbal Communication and its Influence on Interest and Attention of Students*. This study aimed at examining the effect of non-verbal communication of teacher on interest and attention of students. 20 pre-service teachers were chosen at random for conduction of the experiment. Here, 10 teachers formed the control group and the other 10 formed the experimental group. Descriptive observation was chosen to conduct the experiment. Here, the control group was given feedback related to general pedagogy of teaching to which they were exposed, while the experimental group was given feedback based on non-verbal communication as well as the normal feedback. It was found that there was a positive difference in the experimental group as compared to the control group in the use of non-verbal communication. It was the concluded that non-verbal communication had positive influence on the interest and attention of students in a classroom interaction.

Jasminka Kochoska Biljana Gramatkovski (2016), *Eye contact as the most powerful way for classroom management*. Experimenters try to understand the importance of eye contact with respect to classroom management. They talk about how, even though, eye contact is important for all successful conversations to take place, it plays a major role among students, and how a single fleeting look from a teacher across the classroom can send across a message without the usage of any words. It was found that eye contact is used very frequently, in our daily lives, but it is extremely difficult master the skills of correct interpretation of the eye contact. Correct usage of eye contact can help bringing a classroom together, building respect and it facilitates increased learning. Eye contact can be a reason to build or break a communication. It was concluded that eye contact is one of the most important elements of non- verbal communication.

Mohammed Abdallah Abukhadijeh, Master of Marketing, Mohammad Fayez Qasem, Master of Accounting, Mohammad "Abd Alaffo" Al Adham, Master of Accounting (2016), *Body Language and Consumer Persuasion: Evidence from Jordan*. The study was conducted in 2016 using the means of questionnaires, where a total of 180 responses were recorded from individuals from Jordanian Universities. This study was conducted to see the impact of eye contact, gestures and body distance on consumer persuasion in Jordan. The test consisted of 3 parts- descriptive tests for study variables, correlation between variables and research hypothesis using regression analysis. The study concluded that body language is the independent variable, while consumer persuasion is the dependent variable. The correlation value of eye contact, gesture and body proximity were found, each with respect to consumer persuasion and it was established that each had a positive correlation. Correlation value for

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eye contact was 0.419, gestures 0.551, and body proximity 0.617. It was suggested that managers should conduct workshops for employees to enhance effective communications with their clients.

Silvia Bonaccio Jane O'Reilly Sharon L. O'Sullivan François Chiochio (2016), *Nonverbal Behavior and Communication within the Workplace: A Review and an Agenda for Research*. This paper aims to provide a review of literature on non-verbal behaviour with a portion devoted toward applying non-verbal behaviour in organizational settings. It was found through the course of the study that empirical research on non-verbal behaviour is complex and an informed decision must take into account at least three elements: the non-verbal cues which the senders convey, the meaning interpreted by the receivers, and the interaction among the two. This process becomes exponentially more complex and, thus, a neighborhood ripe for empirical work when studying social psychology. Bonaccio et al. found that nonverbal behaviours convey important pieces of social information and contribute to the nature of the relationships that form in organizations. The research also shed some light upon the incorporation of non-verbal behaviours into organizational research.

LEM Abukanna (2015), *The Nature of Body Language and its Role in Communication*. This study talks about the best ways of using body language to express our feeling and emotion in communication. A descriptive research was carried out and a questionnaire was circulated among a sample size consisted fourth year students of English at college of language at Sudan University of Science and Technology. It was found that 46.9% believed that body language had an important role in communication, 34.4% agreed that they used body language to put forth a strong message, 34.4% agreed that they used eye contact in order to regulate communication and 48.1% agreed that they used their body language in order to express their feelings. It was then concluded that body language did play a huge role in developing a purposeful conversation.

Özlem KÖPRÜLÜ (2014), *Using Body Language to Make and Maintain a Solid First Impression and to Decode Students' Behaviours*. This study aimed at explaining the body language, gestures and facial expressions that could facilitate the teachers to leave a good impression on their students and to decode the students' behaviours accurately. A questionnaire was given to each of the subjects which consisted of 6 pictures and MCQ's. This experiment was conducted on 53 3rd year students at Buca Faculty of Education at Dokuz Eylul University. It was found that the teachers were able to understand the emotions related to the pictures presented, most of the times, and also had a high rate of correct answers on an average. It was recommended that teachers should learn how to use their body language to make and maintain a solid first impression and to decode students' body language in the classroom, it would greatly help them communicate what they might wish to transmit to their students accurately.

Jianxue Yin (2014), *Body Language Classification and Communicative Context*. The objective of this paper was to discuss the classification of body language in various contexts. Through the course of the study, it was found that body language is a very complex and vast area which can only be recognized through classified studies. A primary research was conducted to find the meaning of certain terms related to body language. It was found that the communicative context of body language shared some similarities with the verbal language. The conclusion was made that non-verbal communication not only helps with posture, action and expressing feelings, but also facilitates the verbal communication along

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with social context at the time of communication. Hence, it is an extremely important part of a successful communication.

Neha Gupta, (2013), *Effective Body Language in Organisms*. She explains that “nonverbal communication makes up about two thirds of all communication” (Gupta). According to Deborah Bull “80% of what a person understands in a conversation is read through the body” (qtd. Gupta). Gupta explains that folks send signs without knowing through their gestures, body postures, and facial expressions. She says that non-verbal communication is the most honest form of communication, people can infer what one is feeling through the body language. Non-verbal communication is especially used to know if children are lying or not. According to the article, “impression management is an individual’s conscious attempt at control over communication behaviour and cues for the needs of creating a desired impression (often with nonverbal communication).” Gupta also talks about importance of physical appearance which incorporates attire, level of attractiveness, how they appear and other things. The main goal, according to Gupta, is to improve “credibility, likability, interpersonal attractiveness, and dominance.” Although, this idea is not revolutionary as many times people try to change how they behave in order to make a good first impression with someone or simply to make themselves more likable as a person.

Dr. Suat Gunhan, Gulsen Senol, Dr. Sevgi Zeynep Dogan (2012), *Non-verbal Cues: Improving Communication in Construction Projects*. This research focuses on reviewing the role of non-verbal communication in the construction business and also talks about bringing non-verbal communication in the classroom for construction management. Through the course of reviewing the literature, Gunhan et al concluded that communication is the most important factor for completion of construction projects. It was also found that the construction business needed a large amount of body language in order to communicate to the people what needed to be done, due the large number of people engaging in this profession, coming from diverse backgrounds. Towards the end, it was also found that it has become extremely important to teach the students the skill of non-verbal communication in order to make them grow and teach them to be successful leaders in future.

A Pease and B Pease (2011), *Body language and the workplace*. Pease et al talk about the about the aspects of body language, and its psychological messages, can vary from culture to culture. This research mainly talks about body language in contexts of business and dating. Pease et al talks about the various non-verbal communications such as the smile, the arm signals, hand gestures, various cultural differences, eye signals, proxemics, the leg gestures as well as the different mirroring techniques to build rapport. They concluded that a change in the body language can alter one’s approach in life. One can change their mood before going out, feel confident at work and even be more persuasive or convincing as a person. Finally, it was found that the face, gestures, head movement, eye contact, postures, territory and mirroring can be termed as the key points for making a positive body language impression on others.

Mohd Zulf Adli Bin Mohd Rosli (2010), *A study of use of body language among executives within organization in workplace*. A sample size of 30 was chosen, these individuals were presented with questionnaires. The questionnaires were divided into 3 parts- first, talking about the background of the respondent, second talked about evaluating the respondents’ understanding of body language and the third focused upon the problems and effects of body language. It was found that 46.67% respondents agreed that communication will break down if little or no attention is paid to a person’s body gestures, 37% respondents agreed that body

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language signals affect communication, 33.33% slightly agree and 33.33% respondents agree that executives in an organization use body language when they communicate, 46.47% respondents agreed that communication barrier exists in an organization when English is used without the support of body language, and lastly, over 53% respondents agreed that productivity is the result of good communication along with correct words and body gestures. It was concluded that some executives had a difficulty in interpreting body language.

Daisy N. Kurien (2010), *Body Language: silent communicator at workplace*. The study's main aim was to understand the role of body language and its interpretation in the workplace. Kurien concluded, through her study that the employers, colleagues, boss, customers and stakeholders comprehend our professional self, based on what the body language conveys to them. Kurien also talks about it opening more avenues of growth at personal and professional front, for the employees of the organization. Kurien said that body language works silently without the aid of verbal communication. She further said that body language should be mastered as a skill by both- employers and employees in order carry out successful communication as body language is still a silent communicator at the workplace.

Genavie Spence (2010), *Body Language*. Spence talks about the importance of body language in the everyday life, especially during interactions. This research aimed at helping people understand the concept of body language better. Through reviewing the literature of various psychologists, Spence was able to find that throughout the world, the basic emotions like happiness, anger, fear, etc. are expressed more or less in a similar way. It was found that reading simple behaviour is much easier than reading complex behaviour especially because of prevalence of cultural differences. The change in body language during lying was also discussed where it was found that lies could easily be caught as there would be a change in the body language, but this would be a lot more difficult in the case of habitual liars.

A Furnham and E Petrova (2010), *visual communication in business: decoding the signals*. Furnham et al aimed towards making others understand, access and comprehend the psychology of visual communication. The course of the study talked about some "silent" cues which reveal the status of someone, non-verbal communication's influence of labor was also discussed. Some specific gestures like proximity, matching and elevated position were found to be of great importance while communicating in workplaces. It absolutely was also said that although visual communication isn't the sole thing that mattered while trying to see secrets of an individual's behaviour, it's extremely important and does have a large impact on our lives. It absolutely was concluded that visual communication might be a real reflection of our inner state at a specific point of your time as visual communication is that the immediate reaction to a given situation. "Body language points towards a particular character or behaviour rather than recognizing or ignoring it." (Furnham et al).

H Stalter (2010), *How to predict behaviour on workplace by reading and understanding body language*. Stalter's study aimed at making body language more understandable and having an understanding about what people say when they are talking in a workplace, on a general level. The study revealed that understanding body language can make you a better communicator, the body language talks about the hidden meaning of what the other person is saying, personal identity can help one change their body language in order to ensure successful communication. It was also found that open palms, steady eye contact, genuine

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smiles, and mirroring body language are the best signals that can be used to create motivation. Towards the end of the pitch, the client's body language reveals whether the worker has closed a deal or needs to continue with the pitch. Lastly, it was concluded that building rapport is an extremely important aspect of making new bonds and body language plays a huge role in rapport formation.

AE Beall (2009), Reading the hidden communications around you: a guide to reading body language in workplace. Beall uses the concept of "perceive" which is the technique that has been followed to conduct the entire research. Beall wrote an entire book filled with facts and figures, devoted to understanding the skill of reading non-verbal behaviour. Through the research, it was found that perceive talked about engagement, liking, emotions, and the type of relationship between 2 individuals, wherein, each aspect facilitates the formation of insight about what a person is thinking or feeling at the moment. Beall revealed that this technique of perceive provides an individual with a kind of knowledge about the other person through reading the body language and that body language can be read by anyone- they are not hidden at all.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this research, we have defined the terms communication, non-verbal communication, body language, various types of body language and its importance in our daily lives. Through this secondary research, we were able to find the role of body language at a workplace. Body language was found to have a major and vital role in carrying out a successful conversation at the workplace.

Drawing from the various studies discussed in this research, it has been found that body language is not only important in workplace settings, but in all hemispheres of life- for carrying out a successful and meaningful conversation. We found that the culture also has a huge role to play in the determination of the type of body language to be used. Culture defines the proximity an individual is comfortable while talking to another person. The gestures also seem to be different for each culture- while one gesture means something in a particular region, it may be an offensive term in another region.

Through the course of findings, it was observed that body language is easily the most important factor of communication- verbal or non-verbal. Even if there is no spoken word, the body seems to speak it all!

Some people are not able to successively decipher the body language or what it is saying, but even they agree that it is an extremely important aspect to be kept in mind while communicating.

I believe that the skill of body language is one which is extremely important and should be taught to everyone as it is the most communicative tool- it can make or break deals. This should be taught to individuals from a younger age. Body language guidance can also be given to trainees or even other employees in order to help them gain an insight of their clients and what they are thinking of their pitch. The interactions with seniors would also help get an idea about what they really want. Hence, body language ends up being a major factor in any conversation, especially at the workplace.

Limitations and Further Suggestions

This review paper consists of a very limited number of researches. For this review to be generalised, a larger number of primary researches must be taken into account. Along with that, a research can be conducted by the researcher on a small scale to see how true it holds. For future researches, a greater number of researches must be chosen, that are more recent and those researches which cover the topic entirely.

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Conflict of Interest

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