

# Gender differences in communication | essay



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' For men and women, communication can be a very long drive, using different roads — often to get to the same place.' Men and women differ in many ways. They view the world through different lens. One of those differences is that they have different styles of communicating with others. Women are said to have expressive characteristics and men instrumental characteristics. There are lot of factors on which depend the way one communicate, such as where people are from, where they have been brought up, their educational background, their age and it surely depends on their gender.

Communication is known as to be a two-way process involving individuals trying to seek mutual understanding. It does not involve only the process of exchanging information, news, ideas and feelings, but also helps to develop and share meaning. It generally connects people or places in society. In an organization, communication is an essential key function for the management of individual; it cannot operate effectively if there is no communication between the levels, departments and employees.

Gender is an important factor that creates a gap between males and females. Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings and behavior that a given culture associates with one's biological sex. Men and women know about the gender roles they have to adopt at a very early age. Most women and many men communicate differently and adopt different speech skills according to the situation they are facing, the purposes and the roles they have in society and at work. Gender differences emerge from both social and professional settings.

Within an organization, gender is an important factor influencing communication. These gender differences in communication are often revealed during conflict, or even serve as a catalyst for conflict. However, it is not only a threat to society and installs non-understanding at work. Those gender differences might benefit the whole society as well as the organization.

The importance of communication maybe noticed in everyday life, for instance, a little connection can have a large impact and influence in one whole life. Communication problems can make a working environment unpleasant, uncomfortable and unproductive. The origin of conflicts that arouse can come from anything such as personal management styles, educational background to personality conflicts and cultural differences.

In the book, *Men are from Mars and Women from Venus*, John Gray(2004) wrote: Men mistakenly expect women to think, communicate, and react the way men do; women mistakenly expect men to feel, communicate and respond the way women do. People tend to forget that men and women are supposed to be different. As a result the relationship between men and women is filled with unnecessary friction and conflict. He goes on saying that men and women are so different in their approaches to communication that they might come from different planet. They do not have similar goals, needs and values in their communication styles. One main difference he has highlighted is that men are goal-oriented; they define their sense of self through their ability to achieve results. On the other hand, women are relationship-oriented as they define their sense of self by their feelings and by the quality of their relationship.

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Males grow up learning some essential elements considered as being the center of masculinity, such as not being female, be successful, be aggressive, be sexual, be self-reliant, embody and transcend traditional views of masculinity (Wood, 2011). On the other hand, females are taught that appearance is important, showing sensitivity and care is a must, and that they should also expect negative treatment from others, superwoman abilities are anticipated and there is no single meaning of feminine. Wood believes that ' through communication with others, we come to understand how society defines masculinity and feminity.'

Both men and women differ in the way they manage people and give orders. Many well-respected studies have shown that women have the tendency to soften their demands and statements, as compared to men who tend to be more direct. Women for example, use tag lines, phrases like ' don't you think' preceding the presentation of an idea, ' if you don't mind' following a demand or ' this may be a crazy idea, but' followed by a suggestion, trying to make their opinions and ideas be accepted and understood by others.

Most women are conditioned by culture to maintain harmonious relationships with others. That condition is revealed in softened demands, constrained statements and a generally more tentative or lack confidence speech. In some circumstances, women tend to have direct conversation like men. This does not mean that the person is arrogant, bossy or feels superior compared to others but these are nothing more than learned ways of communicating.

Another difference that has been brought up when talking about gender communication between men and women is that women most of the time

ask more questions as compared to men. Asking questions have different meanings when it comes to gender differences. Men ask questions for only one reason; to gather information. For women, asking questions have purposes to gather information, but as it can be noticed, women will also ask questions when they already know the answer. The reason behind this is that they want to seek interest in what the other person has said to cultivate the relationship.

The managing styles and the ways of asking questions bring up fundamental matters about women's role in the workplace. There is nothing wrong in having different ways of communicating. Men have the perfect right to be more direct and ask fewer questions, while women and some men are simply more at ease with a softer style of communicating. The problems and conflicts then can emerge when those differences lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretations, which can sooner or later disrupt teamwork and even ruin someone's opportunities for upward mobility.

People should try to understand each other way of communicating and particular way of speaking in order to build better mixed gender teams. Someone may be crude. This does not mean that the person is cold, uncaring or uninvolved. On the other hand, a more tentative approach does not necessarily indicate a sign of weakness, fear or lack of confidence. People communicate the way they do, because they are taught to do so since the very beginning of their childhood. What really matters is that men and women give each other a chance, that they get to know what lies behind the communication style, and most important, that they resist the urge to jump to premature conclusions about the meaning of particular style.

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There are two main ways of studying gender differences in communication styles; the academic research and popular literature. Men and women differ psychologically in the way they act, from the style in which they communicate, to the way in which they attempt to influence others.

The most obvious difference between men and women ways of communication comes to the fact that men and women view the use of conversation differently. Academic research on psychological gender differences has proved that women use language to promote social connections and create relationships, men use communication as a means to bring to bear dominance and achieve tangible goals. This is such as women are, overall, more expressive, tentative, and polite in conversation, while men are more assertive, and power hungry. (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003)

Popular works by John Gray and Deborah Tannen show that while men view conversations as a way of establishing and maintaining status and superiority in conversation, women see that the motivation behind communication is to create and foster an intimate bond with the other party by talking about tropical problems and issues they are communally facing. (Gray, 1990. Tannen, 1990)

Other academic research stated that women are less used to powerful speech. They tend to swear less, speak more politely, and use more tag questions and intensifiers. (Lakoff, 1975) Women tend also to interrupt less than men do. Researchers have concluded that maybe it is because of their perceived lower status compared to men. (Thorne & Henley, 1975) This can also be because of the societal norms which enforce this gender status

hierarchy. Pearson, 1985 also bring up the fact that women often weaken their statements. One explanation he gave for this is their low self-confidence in what they are saying and their fear of being wrong, which can be associated to their perceived inferior status to male managers in the workplace.

Some theorists have given their point of view on the gender communication differences. They have suggested that these styles of communicating put are disadvantageous for women when they interact with others. The breakdown in communication occurs because men and women occupy different roles in society. Social roles are reflected through language and demonstrate unequal relations based on gender. The man's language is discriminatory toward women and this leaves the impression that men are more capable and confident as leaders. (Lakoff, 1975)

Gender communication difference is a worldwide issue. Communication between men and women differ in many ways, affecting their speech and outcomes.

In Japan, men and women have different ways of communicating. Women in Japan speak more politely as compared to men. The Japanese language features elements that make women's speech sound polite and feminine. In the meanwhile, men's speech sound less polite and masculine. The language difference between genders reinforces Japanese social norms. Where women are the subordinates of men.

In England modern society, it would therefore appear that women are equal with men. However the harsh reality tells us that women are not provided

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with an equal opportunity even for discussion, due to the fact that the two sexes respectively command different communication styles. In other words, the language women use is different from the one that men use. Tabooed words and slang can be found more frequently in men's language than in women's though they are of the same educational level. For example, ' Get a life, Facts be damned'. Men and women have been socialized within their gender roles since the very beginning of childhood. The educational level does not determined the communication styles of both men and women.