

# The Relationship between Social Desirability, Responsibility, Self-Efficacy and Communication Skills of Students

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between social desirability, self-efficacy, and responsibility and communication skills of high school students in Ahvaz city. The sample of this study has been consisted of 360 participants that have been selected by cluster sampling method. This research is a descriptive and correlational study. The tools that have been used in this research are: Social Desirability questionnaire of Crowne and Marlowe (1960), the responsibility questionnaire of Harrison (1999), general self-efficacy questionnaire of Scherer et al. (1982) and communication skills questionnaire of Harjy and Marshall (1986). The data has been analyzed by using the statistical methods of Pearson correlation and multiple regressions. The results have shown that there is a positive relationship between social desirability, self-efficacy, responsibility and communication skills of students. The results of multiple regression analysis have shown that social desirability and responsibility and self-efficacy are respectively the best predictors of communication skills.

**Keywords:** social desirability, responsibility, self-efficacy, communication skills

## 1. Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are one of the most important components of human life from birth to death. None of the human potential capabilities will grow without the presence of interpersonal relationships. Acquisition of proper interpersonal relationships is so important in the development of mental health, personality, formation of identity, and improvement of life quality, enhancement of compatibility and self-efficacy. People who have poor communication skills are always less accepted by others and they are also faced with many short-term and long-term problems. In most cases the consequences of these cases are: loneliness, family and academic problems, lack of competence and job dissatisfaction, stress, physical illness and even death. To get rid of such problems, people should be familiar with a set of skills; it means that each individual should have the required knowledge and skills to make a healthy and productive communication with others (Fayaz et al., 2010). Communication is a basic necessity in human life. Human beings are naturally social creatures that meet each other's needs through mutual cooperation. Human relationships not only enable people to meet their physical and security needs, but also help them to meet their psychological needs, such as the need for love, attachment and self-worth. The ability to communicate is essential to create well-being and human performance (Hemati, 2008). In the community, students should have the ability to solve problems, talk about their problems, make communication with different people, have individual and group perception, and have the ability to control their feelings, motivations and behaviors. The inability of the people of a society to have correct perception of problems, lack of cooperation, lack of understanding each other and such things will face them with problems in making communication with people in a society which is moving towards globalization. This issue will create a generation who are weak and powerless against the variety of social issues, and these issues result from the lack of social skills specially communication skills (Khosravi, 2008). Social desirability implies to the learned and accepted social behaviors that help people to communicate with each other in a way that it would lead to positive responses and avoid negative responses (Akbarinezhad, 2008).

Morgan (1980) believes that social desirability creates the possibility to start and sustain a positive and mutual interaction with others. The social processes refer to the person's ability to create a sophisticated behavior in response to the feedback of social desirability and based on the rules and related objectives. Human being is a social creature and living individually is almost impossible for him. Ideal social upbringing, having good

relationships with others and the ability to have compatibility with the environment are the most important factors of happiness (Akbarinezhad, 2008). It can be said that, social development is the most important aspect of any person's growth. The measure of everyone's social development is the level of their compatibility with others. This other people includes everyone such as friends, colleagues, families and relatives, neighbors and even the people whom we meet for the first time.

Social development is not only effective on our compatibility with people who have relationships with us now, but also is effective on our career success and social progress after retirement. In today's world due to the complexities of life, human being is faced with various challenges including population crisis, the crisis of health, nutrition and changes in technology and professional terms, the impacts of new technologies on social skills and ethics and family problems. Each one of these crises will impose some problems on people's lives and their personal and social behaviors. Regardless of the current problems, the frequent changes and the changes in living patterns, changes in social expectations and changes in values, beliefs and culture can directly or indirectly affect the person's ability to compromise (Hariri, 2007). Today's developing society requires responsible and self-sufficient people, and teaching the skill of social responsibility to children and adolescents requires a particular atmosphere at both home and school. Some opportunities should be provided for the children and adolescents to find evaluation tools in order to help them make better decisions. They need the decisions that in this complex world could lead them to have a satisfying and productive life. Today's human beings need to take responsibility for their lives and destiny more than ever, and this won't happen without increasing the perception of children and adolescents about their own role in determining their destiny and building their life quality. In order to achieve these goals, diligence and careful planning is necessary (Soheili, 2008). Responsibility is the person's obligation and commitment toward himself and (his beliefs, values, job duties and family) (Soheili, 2008). One of the variables that is associated with communication skills is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the person's judgments about his abilities, capacities and capabilities to carry out special tasks. The judgments of self-efficacy have a high importance and sensitivity because they have an important role in the development of intrinsic motivation. Self-efficacy is the person's belief in his ability to perform the behaviors that could lead to a favorable result in a special situation (Gheibi, 2010). Intrinsic motivation grows when the person tries to achieve exciting measures, in this state, a potential self-efficacy perception is created in the person to achieve these measures, and also when the person achieves the favorable result, he finds a positive self-assessment. This internal interest will lead to the individual's long-term efforts without the presence of environmental rewards. High self-efficacy can play a decisive role in intrinsic motivation and communication skills of students. Self-efficacy is effective on people's confidence about their own abilities to control their thoughts, feelings and activities, and also their actual performance, excitement and choosing behaviors and, ultimately, the level of effort that they make to do an activity. These beliefs affect the quality of emotional health and vulnerability against depression and stress and making decisions in a critical situation (Gheibi, 2010). Sideridis et al. (2013) in a research have studied motivation, meta-cognition and psychopathology as the predictors of learning disabilities; the results have shown that the level of motivation (such as self-efficacy, motivating force, avoiding the duty, dedication to purpose or self-perception) is very accurate in classifying the students with learning disabilities. The results also have shown that meta-cognition and psychopathology are powerful predictors in learning disabilities. Glasser (2012) believes that human problems and abnormalities result from the fact that they have not accepted their responsibilities, because they cannot satisfy their basic needs on the basis of proper and humanitarian conditions; in fact, their parents did not have such skills and no body have taught them to have responsibility. Glasser cares more about the behavioral aspect of responsibility and has less emphasis on its cognitive and emotional aspects.

Peterson et al. (2011) have studied the relationship between social desirability and personality traits in students. They have shown that social desirability strongly balances the relationship between personality factors (especially extraversion and neuroticism) and students' preparation; but it had a little effect on the relationship between personality and academic performance. Tan and Hall (2012) have conducted a research on the relationship between social desirability and students' performance. They have found that social desirability has a significant positive effect on the avoidance of performance, whereas it has a little effect on the tendency to have performance. Mehmet Ulukan et al. (2012) have conducted a research on the level of participation in exercise based on its various variables among the elementary school students, and also the relationship between the level of participation and communication skills. In this study, they have concluded that the level of student's participation in sport activities and their communication skills significantly depends on their gender, age, parents' education, level of income and social status. According to the mentioned issues, the aim of this study is to find that what is the relationship between social desirability, social responsibility and self-efficacy and student's communication skills?

## 2. Method

The method of this research is correlational. The statistical population has included all the male and female high school students in Ahvaz city that are studying in 2015-2016. The total number of students is around 5100. The sample of this study has been consisted of 360 participants (170 boys and 190 girls) from the high school students, and they have been selected by cluster sampling and based on Morgan table.

### 2.1 Research Tools

#### 2.1.1 The Social Desirability Questionnaire

This scale has been developed by Crowne and Marlowe in 1960, and it has 9 questions that are presented as completely correct, correct, no idea, disagree and totally disagree. People who obtain between the score of 20 or higher greatly consider the social approvals. The actual behavior of these people is very concerted and shows a high compatibility with the rules and social norms. Bagheri (2006) in a research, in order to validate this scale has correlated it with the scores of the self-confirmation questionnaire of rattus, and it has been found that there is a significant positive relationship between these scales. Also, by using Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods, the reliability coefficients of this scale have been respectively obtained 0.74 and 0.71 that generally have shown the acceptability of its reliability coefficients. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha method has been used to determine the reliability of social desirability questionnaire that has been achieved 0.84 which shows that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire are acceptable.

#### 2.1.2 Responsibility Assessment Questionnaire

In order to assess the responsibility, the subscale of responsibility assessment which is taken from the California psychological questionnaire has been used. Among the 462 questions of the main questionnaire, 42 questions of responsibility have been extracted and used. The mentioned questionnaire for the first time has been presented by Harrison Gough in 1987 and it had 18 scales, in 1999 he has reviewed it again and its questions have been changed to 162 and its subscales have been changed to 20. The responsibility measurement scale with 42 questions has been used in order to measure some characteristics such as conscientiousness, commitment, diligence, seriousness, reliability, discipline-based behaviors, logic and sense of responsibility (Marnat, 2003; translated by Nikkho, 2006). The reliability coefficients of the responsibility scale in the research of Mousavi (Mousavi, 1998) has been obtained 0.070, in the study of Rezaei (Rezaei, 1998) 0.65 and in the research of Mahmudi (Mahmudi, 2004) have been obtained 0.64. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha method has been used to determine the reliability of the responsibility questionnaire and it has been achieved 0.88 which shows that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire are acceptable.

#### 2.1.3 General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been developed by Scherer and colleagues in 1982 and it has 17 articles. The self-Efficacy Questionnaire measures the individual's idea about his ability to deal with different situations. This questionnaire has been set based on the five Likert scale. In this scale, the score of completely disagree is one, and the score of completely agree is 5. High scores indicate the high self-efficacy. Scherer and colleagues (1982) have achieved the Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 for this questionnaire. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha method has been used to determine the reliability of responsibility questionnaire that has been achieved 0.83 which shows that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire are acceptable.

#### 2.1.4 Communication Skills Test

This test has been developed by Harji and Marshall (1986) to measure students' communication skills. The first step in preparing this test is to study the interpersonal communication skills. According to this model, three general factors have been determined including management of emotions, perception and assertiveness. This test has 34 questions. In this test, the participants according to their level of agreement with the question select one of the options from the first option (almost never) that has the lowest level of agreement to the last option that is (most of the time) which has the highest level of agreement. The range of scores varies from one to five; so the reversed questions (1, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, 34, 32, 28, 25, 23, 21, 19, 17, 14, 13, and 12) will be scored reversely. The total score for each sub-test questions is the score of that sub-test. The validity of the questionnaire in the research of Hossein Chari and Fadakar (2005) on a sample of 733 Iranian students by using Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods for the total score of the test has been respectively reported 0.71 and 0.76. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha method has been used to determine the reliability of responsibility questionnaire that has been achieved 0.81 which shows that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire are acceptable.

### 3. Results

The descriptive findings of this study have included the statistical parameters such as mean, standard deviation for all the studied variables that are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the score of variables between social desirability, responsibility, self-efficacy and communication skills among male and female students

Variable	Statistical indicators		Mean	Standard deviation	Number
	Participants				
Social desirability	Male students		37.08	6.13	170
	Female students		39.35	7.43	190
	Total students		38.22	7.18	360
Responsibility	Female students		101.62	20.07	170
	Male students		97.36	18.01	190
	Total students		99.49	19.04	360
Self-efficacy	Female students		62.58	9.84	170
	Male students		67.62	11.39	190
	Total students		65.10	10.62	360
Communication skill	Female students		81.70	13.88	170
	Male students		78.19	12.76	190
	Total students		79.95	13.32	360

#### 3.1 The Findings of the Research Hypotheses

This study includes the following hypotheses, each hypothesis with its obtained results from their analysis have been presented below:

##### 3.1.1 First Hypothesis

There is a relationship between social desirability and communication skills of students.

Table 2. Simple correlation coefficients between social desirability and communication skills of students

The criterion variable	Statistical indicators		The correlation coefficient (r)	Level of significance (p)	Number of samples (n)
	The predictor variable				
Communication skills	Social desirability		0.44	0.0001	360

As can be seen in Table 2, there is a significant positive relationship between social desirability and communication skills of students ( $p=0.0001$ ,  $r=0.44$ ). Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, the students who have higher social desirability will also have better communication skills and vice versa.

##### 3.1.2 The Second Hypothesis

There is a relationship between responsibility and communication skills of students.

Table 3. Simple correlation coefficients between responsibility and communication skills of students

The criterion variable	Statistical indicators		The correlation coefficient (r)	Level of significance (p)	Number of samples (n)
	The predictor variable				
Communication skills	responsibility		0.39	0.0001	360

As can be seen in Table 3, there is a significant positive relationship between responsibility and communication skills of students ( $p=0.0001$ ,  $r=0.39$ ). Thus, the second hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, the students who have higher level of responsibility will also have better communication skills and vice versa.

### 3.1.3 The Third Hypothesis

There is a relationship between self-efficacy and communication skills of students.

Table 4. Simple correlation coefficients between self-efficacy and communication skills of students

The criterion variable	Statistical indicators		The correlation coefficient (r)	Level of significance (p)	Number of samples (n)
	The predictor variable				
Communication skills	self-efficacy		0.32	0.002	360

As can be seen in Table 4, there is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and communication skills of students ( $p=0.002$ ,  $r=0.32$ ). Thus, the third hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, the students who have higher self-efficacy will also have better communication skills and vice versa.

### 3.1.4 Fourth Hypothesis

There is a multiple relationship between social desirability, self- efficacy and responsibility and communication skills of students.

Table 5. Multiple correlation coefficients of the predictor variables (social desirability, responsibility and self-efficacy) with the communication skills of students with the simultaneous entry method and stage method

Method	Predictor variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p=	$\beta$	t	p=
entry method	Social desirability					0.30	6.019	0.0001
	responsibility	0.49	0.24	14.51	0.0001	0.25	4.89	0.0001
	self-efficacy					0.19	3.01	0.0002
Stage method	1-Social desirability	0.44	0.20	34.34	0.001	0.44	7.70	0.0001
	2-responsibility					0.31	5.66	0.0001
						0.22	3.69	0.0001
	3-self-efficacy					0.29	3.51	0.0001
			0.59	0.35	44.36	0.0001	0.26	4.55
					0.24	4.27	0.002	

As can be seen in Table 5, the regression of the prediction of communication skills of students from the variables of social desirability, responsibility and self-efficacy is significant ( $p<0.0001$ ,  $F=14.51$ ). Thus, the forth hypothesis is confirmed.

Social desirability factor with the beta coefficient of 0.30, responsibility factor with the beta coefficient of 0.25, and self-efficacy factor with the beta coefficient of 0.19 can positively and significantly predict the communication skills of students.

Also, the value of  $R^2$  indicates that 24% of the variance of the communication skills of students can be explained by the above-mentioned variables.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study is conducted in order to investigate the relationship between social desirability, self-efficacy, and responsibility and communication skills of high school students of Ahvaz city in 2015. The research hypotheses are explained as follows:

As it has been seen, there is a significant positive relationship between social desirability and communication skills of students. The students who have higher social desirability will also have better communication skills and vice versa. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Zafari et al. (2013), Mahmoudi Rad (2013), Lim, La and Nai (2012), Bykerz (2012), Mehmet Alvakan and colleagues (2012), Darnon, Dominer, Delmas Pool Ferry and Butra (2011), and Peterson et al. (2011). According to these results, we can say that socialization is a process in which the norms, skills, incentives, attitudes and behaviors of people are formed in order to make their current or future role in the society to seem appropriate. This process begins from the moment of birth, and some people, groups and organizations have a key role in it. Socialization is a system of mutual relationship between the individual and the society; therefore, both the cultural impacts and individual's growth patterns must be considered in this system simultaneously (Akbarinezhad, 2008).

As it has been seen, there is a significant positive relationship between responsibility and communication skills of students. The students who have higher level of responsibility will also have better communication skills and vice versa. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Yunesi et al. (2010), Akbarinezhad (2008), Kordlu (2008), Soheili (2008), Hariri (2007), Ranjbarian et al. (2005), Glaser (2012), and Miyamoto (2012). According to these results we can say that delegating responsibilities to children and involving them in the society is a fundamental necessity to facilitate their development and to enter them to the adulthood period. Working is the need of every healthy person and also is the therapist for emotional feelings and imaginations of adolescences. A teenager who enters the community and gets familiar with the world of work can tolerate the pressures more easily, and his social, emotional and intellectual development would be accelerated. More important is that an opportunity will be given to the teenagers to examine their ideas in practice and get developed gradually; he also can find a plan for his occupational and social roles and determine his life plan Kordlu (2008).

As it has been seen, there is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and communication skills of students. The students who have higher self-efficacy will also have better communication skills and vice versa. The results of this study are consistent with findings of Michaeli et al. (2015), Ahmadi et al. (2013), Harji et al. (2007), Sideridis et al. (2013), Watson (2011). According to these results we can say that self-efficacy as a cognitive process in morbid psychology plays a fundamental role in lower perceived self-efficacy or perceived inefficiency. Having high self-efficacy increases personal health and also enhances the ability to perform tasks in various ways. People who believe in their capabilities consider the difficult tasks as the challenges that they should master them, and instead of considering them as a threat and avoiding them, they choose that challenging goals and stay committed to fulfill them. They believe that they are able to control the threatening situations. Such an opinion about the capabilities will reduce the stress and depression of the person and leads to the completion of tasks (Rezaianasab, 2010). Self-efficacy is the person's perception and judgment of his abilities and skills to perform the tasks that are essential for special situations. On the other hand, the sense of self-efficacy enables people to use their skills in dealing with obstacles and to do extraordinary things; therefore, self-efficacy is an important factor to have successful performances and basic necessary skills. Self-efficacy affects the amount of effort to perform a task. People who believe in their efficiency will make additional efforts to deal with the obstacles and problems. Interpersonal relationships are one of the most important components of human life from birth to death. None of the human potential capabilities will grow without the presence of interpersonal relationships. Acquisition of proper interpersonal relationships is so important in the development of mental health, personality, formation of identity, and improvement of life quality, enhancement of compatibility and self-efficacy. People who have poor communication skills are always less accepted by others and they are also faced with many short-term and long-term problems. In most cases the consequences of these cases are: loneliness, family and academic problems, lack of competence and job dissatisfaction, stress, physical illness and even death. To get rid of such problems, people should be familiar with a set of skills; it means that

each individual should have the required knowledge and skills to make a healthy and productive communication with others.

As we can see, the regression analysis of the prediction of communication skills of students based on the variables of social desirability, responsibility and self-efficacy is significant. Social desirability factor with the beta coefficient of 0.30, responsibility factor with the beta coefficient of 0.25, and self-efficacy factor with the beta coefficient of 0.19 can positively and significantly predict the communication skills of students. Also, the value of  $R^2$  indicates that 24% of the variance of the communication skills of students can be explained by the above-mentioned variables. In the community, students should have the ability to solve problems, talk about their problems, make communication with different people, have individual and group perception, and have the ability to control their feelings, motivations and behaviors. The inability of the people of a society to have correct perception of the problems, lack of cooperation, lack of understanding each other and such things will face them with problems in making communication with people in a society which is moving towards globalization. This issue will create a generation who are weak and powerless against the variety of social issues, and these issues result from lack of social skills specially communication skills (Khosravi, 2008).

Initially, the sense of attachment starts in the family and then expands to larger groups and communities but in the end, this sense of attachment must involve all the humans. In this regard, social responsibility could be considered as the essence of social cycle in which the people can recognize their identity. Certainly, by having social responsibility, the sense of connection to a group of people and having a benevolent relationship with those who share their common interest or goals with others could get so much easier; these groups include family, school, class, religious community and so on. When the person has an appropriate social behavior in these groups, he expects to be rewarded by their members. In this concept even a bunch of gang members also can have social responsibility in their groups. Inability to control some of the unrelated and confounding variables including intelligence quotient, level of interest, motivation, fatigue or other effective variables, and also, lack of homogeneity between participants based on their determining variables such as age, education of parents and other demographic variables have been considered as some of the limitations of this research. One of the other limitations of this study was that due to lack of time we could not conduct a retest on this sample and then compare its results with the results of this study. On the other hand, this study has been conducted on a sample of male and female high school students in Ahvaz city, and generalization of these findings to another sample in other areas or grades should be implemented with great caution. One of the limitations of this study that is specified to questionnaires is that sometimes some of the respondents are reluctant and uninterested to answer the questions. Also, sometimes people in order to provide a better image of themselves do not answer some of the questions correctly. Considering the fact that the present study has been conducted to investigate the relationship between social desirability, self-efficacy, responsibility and communication skills of high school students in Ahvaz city; it is suggested that in the future researches, the cause and effect relationship of these variables should be examined. It is suggested to conduct this research on other communities because enhancing such researches can prevent many problems and psychological and social damages. In such researches, it is better to use the questionnaires with fewer questions so the respondents could answer the questions with more patience. The findings of this research can be used for training and informing the students, and social desirability, responsibility and self-efficacy can be used as the most important factors that affect interpersonal and social relationships of the students. Since the students have considered the criteria of intellectual agreement as the most important factor in selecting the behavioral patterns, it is necessary to provide the opportunity for the students in the schools to have the chance of getting involved in the debates and present their ideas. As a result, the selection of behavioral patterns for students could be done more accurately and logically.

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