

Interpersonal Intelligence: An Introduction

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Abstract: Interpersonal intelligence is the form of intelligence that governs your ability to relate to others and manage relationships. It may also be regarded as the ability to effectively communicate with others, understand and interact effectively with them. It is a skill we all have to some degree. It is a premium if you are a teacher, politician, pastor, clinicians, therapist, or salesperson. It is useful in school and at work place. People with high interpersonal intelligence are often sensitive, introspective, compassionate, and empathetic. This paper provides an introduction to interpersonal intelligence.

Keywords: *Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Multiple Intelligences*

I. INTRODUCTION

Intelligence is a property of the mind that includes many related abilities like the capacities to learn, reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, and understand ideas. It is a general mental ability to learn and apply knowledge in manipulating the environment. It may also be regarded as the ability that causes a person to function effectively in a certain situation. Intelligence is a vital component of psychology. It is considered as an inborn feature in all human beings [1].

There are many different types of intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is one of nine multiple intelligences of Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist [2]. He believed human intelligence was multidimensional. He listed the following forms of intelligence [3]:

1. Musical intelligence: Ability to identify rhythms and sounds
2. Visual Intelligence: Ability to visualize and become aware of the surrounding environment
3. Linguistic Intelligence: Ability to use words effectively
4. Mathematical/Logical reasoning: Conceptual and abstract thinking
5. Interpersonal Intelligence: Ability of a person to understand and interact with other people effectively
6. Kinesthetic Intelligence: Ability to use the body effectively
7. Naturalistic Intelligence: Unique knowledge about plants and nature
8. Intrapersonal Intelligence: Ability to understand one's innermost feelings

Figure 1 illustrates of eight multiple intelligences [4]. Evidently, Gardner's list is still not exhaustive. There are other types of intelligence such Social Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Business Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Augmented Intelligence, Computational Intelligence, Machine Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence, Abstract Intelligence, Swarm Intelligence, Ambient Intelligence, Digital Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and the list continues. These intelligences are relatively independent. Every

intelligence is unique and important in its own backyard. In this paper, we will focus on interpersonal intelligence.



Figure 1: Illustration of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences [4].

II. WHAT IS INTEPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE?

The term "interpersonal intelligence" was originally developed in 1983 to describe behavior between people in an encounter. Interpersonal intelligence refers to the ability to relate well with others and manage relationships. Individuals with high interpersonal intelligence are characterized by their sensitivity to other people's moods, temperaments, motivations, and feelings. It may be regarded as the ability to recognize distinctions between other people, to react appropriately to their needs, to understand their actions and feelings, and to appreciate such perspectives with empathy. It is a crucial factor for people in occupations that require interacting with people or leading them. People with interpersonal intelligence belong to the group of extroverts.

The basic values contained in the main skills of interpersonal intelligence include [5]: (1) the ability to empathize with others, (2) the ability to organize a group of people towards a common goal, (3) the ability to recognize and read the minds of others, and (4) the ability to make friends or establish contacts.

Individuals with interpersonal intelligence has the following interpersonal characteristics [6]:

- Extraverted
- Enjoys social events
- Loves crowds
- Empathetic
- Enjoys teaching others
- Has many friends
- Enjoys team sports
- Counsels others
- Loves meeting new people
- Sensitive to others

These characteristics act as the foundation of interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal intelligence is often mentioned along with intrapersonal intelligence. Although the two are related, they are different. The personal intelligence consists of both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, as shown in Figure 2 [7]. Interpersonal intelligence is often called people-smart or people quotient (PQ). It is illustrated in Figure 3 [8].



Figure 2: Personal intelligence (intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence) [7].



Figure 3: Interpersonal intelligence [8].

People who demonstrate interpersonal intelligence are naturally inclined to become politicians, clergy, social worker, manager, supervisor, teachers, therapists, diplomats, salespeople, receptionist, and negotiators. According to Gardner, examples of people with high interpersonal intelligence include Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Ronald Reagan, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bill Gates, Tony Robbins, Bill Clinton, Phil McGraw, and Oprah Winfrey. These familiar individuals are natural communicators who possess interpersonal skills such as listening, talking, and relating to others [9]. It is good to know that these individuals are not born with interpersonal intelligence.

III. DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Now that we understand the importance of interpersonal skills in our lives, let us see how to improve them. There are several ways by which people can enhance, build or develop their interpersonal intelligence. The following ways are suggested [10]:

- Get organized! Use a time management system to make sure you keep in touch regularly with your network of business associates and friends.
- Decide to meet one new person each day (or week).
- Join a volunteer or service-oriented group
- Start a hobby that involves you having to go to a regular meeting of like-minded people
- Join the Samaritans

- Spend 15 minutes each day practicing active listening with your spouse and children, or a close friend
- Throw a party and invite people you don't know very well
- Take a leadership role – at work or in the community
- Start your own support group
- Participate in workshops or seminars in interpersonal and communication skills
- Have regular family meetings
- Strike up conversation with people in public places
- Find several pen friends from different cultures and parts of the world
- Offer to tutor other people on an informal basis in something you have expertise in
- Spend fifteen minutes a day just people-watching – on a train, bus, shopping center or restaurant
- Study the lives of well-known socially competent people and decide what you want to 'model' from them
- Meditate on your connection with those around you – your family, close friends, work colleagues and community – and eventually, the whole planet!
- Make a list of all the people that you love and make sure you tell them all this week

The best way to incorporate interpersonal intelligence skills is to work as part of a group and use social networking, social media, and social gaming,

IV. APPLICATIONS

Interpersonal intelligence is a must-have for professionals such as lawyers and negotiators who will need to look at things from another person's perspective to determine the next action. Interpersonal intelligence is at play in the following applications [11]:

A. Social Interaction: Individuals with interpersonal intelligence thrive with social interaction. They work well with others, make friends easily, empathize, and understand others. They have natural inner glow and easily attract other people. They know how to keep everyone motivated and happy to work. Consequently, they achieve more with less effort. The higher you go on the career ladder, the more interpersonal intelligence you will need.

B. Influencing Others: Convincing and persuading others to work together is not easy. With strong interpersonal intelligence, it's possible to influence others to forget about their individual conflicting interests and work for the greater good. We influence others in our speech, life, and example. By being confident and eloquent, team members will look up to you and want to be a part of your end result.

C. Conflict Resolution: Having strong interpersonal intelligence helps in resolving conflicts and promoting harmony among colleagues. One needs to look at the situation from each person's perspective and try to empathize with them. Knowing how to live peacefully with others will greatly benefit your career progress. There are three ways to be an effective conflict resolver. First, create a climate of mutual trust.. Second, put the real issue on the table.. Third, negotiate win-win solutions [12].

D. The Golden Rule: This is a maxim of altruism seen in many religions and cultures. It is the principle that encourages one to treat others as one would like to be treated.

E. School: Interpersonal intelligence plays a vital role in education. Educating students in the 21st century requires a different approach from the traditional mode. Students need to become critical, independent thinkers, problem solvers, good communicators, analyzers of information, and the ability to work with peers. Interpersonal intelligence is needed in order to achieve this [13]. A student displays the characteristics of interpersonal intelligence by getting along with others in the class and working well with others to complete an assignment. Students with interpersonal intelligence showcase their skill in the classroom. They enjoy school group activities such as speech, drama, debate, and social gatherings. Teachers can help such students use their skills through a variety of activities, which will prepare students in future occupations by learning how to solve conflicts, take risks, and empathize with others [14]. Homeschooling parents with large families find ways to help their children in shaping their intellectual development. A parent can help their child with an aptitude for interpersonal skills by matching talents to specific careers.

F. Workplace: All employees need to be interpersonal intelligence or people smart because everyone in today's workforce deals with people. The people business is no longer the domain of the few. It now includes everyone.

V. BENEFITS

Interpersonal intelligence helps you become friendly and a result helps to bring unity to the team. It helps to achieve more when working with others and reap maximum benefit. If you are sensitive to the way other people feel, it would be easier for you to make them do what you desire. Interpersonal intelligence helps you to take advantage of good opportunities in the workplace and it propels you to managerial or supervisory role.

Other benefits of interpersonal intelligence in your career progress include the following [11]:

1. You will be more influential hence people will be happier to work under you
2. You will have better access to information and new opportunities
3. You will have an easier time seeking approvals from superiors
4. You will naturally rise up to fill any leadership vacuum when the situation calls for it
5. Interviews will be more enjoyable
6. Networking events will be more useful
7. People will remember you more, hence when opportunities arise, you will be more likely to be chosen
8. By empowering and encouraging your colleagues, you will be able to build a stronger team that will produce even better results in your assignments resulting in more rewards for everyone
9. You will be able to resolve conflicts early before they turn into rivalry that can impact negatively on the group or department's results
10. You will be able to give feedback without offending, hence it will be easy to make improvements without creating conflicts.

CHALLENGES

There have been a number of questions on human brain and language learning, some of which are yet to be answered. The most common of these questions concern what makes some people more intelligent than others. Some researchers have questioned interpersonal intelligence in spite of its significance. They have questioned the role of interpersonal

intelligence in language learning. Some attribute higher intelligence scores of bi/multilingual speakers to greater mental flexibility and a greater facility in concept formation [15]. English is weak in describing intensities of interpersonal intelligence.

CONCLUSION

Interpersonal intelligence is salient in our daily life. It is important regardless of the field, industry, or career. No matter which field you work in, interpersonal intelligence will be beneficial to you in the long run. Interpersonal skills are needed to interact in social situations. Interpersonal intelligence allows us to affect others by understanding their intentions, motivations, personalities, and desires. Without it, we lose the ability to exist socially. For more information about interpersonal intelligence, one should consult the books in [2,3,12, 16,17] and a related journal: *Intelligence*

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