

# A STUDY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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## Abstract

The study was conducted to evaluate the importance of communication skills (verbal/nonverbal) for employability in hospitality industry and to identify the measures to be undertaken by the hotel management students and institutes to improve communication skills for increased employability. Questionnaires are administered to students and faculty of hospitality institute in Pune city (India) for the purpose of collection of primary data through google forms and results obtained are analyzed. The main focus of the questionnaire is towards evaluating the importance of communication skills (verbal/ nonverbal) for employability in hospitality industry. Secondary data is collected from various online reports, e-newspaper articles. The populations were the students and faculty of hospitality institutes in Pune city. A total sample of 102 hospitality students and 34 faculty in Pune city were selected. The method adopted for sampling was Quota sampling. Verbal and nonverbal communication is very important in the hospitality industry for an employee. It helps to face and succeed in an interview. Employers prefer candidates fluent in communication skills, when hiring for a job position in the hospitality industry thus it facilitates to secure a job. A person with a good hold over his/her communication skills can progress better in a hospitality career. Both forms of communication support to develop and build a good relationship with customers and colleagues and achieve customer satisfaction. Students can create first impressions with good communication skills and build in confidence as well as develop positive attitude hence the hospitality faculty should put in more efforts. Clarity of communication helps to avoid any misunderstandings and doubts. Effective communication in the hospitality industry starts with active listening. Students need to be motivated and seek activities that help improve their communication skills. Non-verbal communication is also an important component of effective communication. Properly dressed will not only increase your self-confidence but it will also impress and attract other people. Proper grooming and a professional appearance are important to gain respect in the workplace. The way you look and carry yourself creates an impression on the people you work alongside. Tone of voice can not only affect how people perceive but also their willingness to listen as it clarifies and conveys meaning.

**Keywords:** Communication Skills, Employability, Hospitality Industry.

## Introduction

In today's global scenario, Communication skills play a very important role in all aspects of life and career. The hospitality industry is a Service sector that requires good communication skills, both Verbal and Non-verbal, to succeed, apart from the new normal - Digital communication, which is extremely necessary in the hospitality industry to be successful.

Communication skills are very important for an employee in the Hospitality industry, as good communication skills help to enhance a guest's experience in a hotel: it shows that you are paying attention and listening to them, valuing their opinion and feedback, thus, conveying messages clearly. This can result in customer satisfaction, increased loyalty, increased business and consequently, the hotel getting more repeat business.

Effective communication in the hospitality industry starts with active listening. This means you have to not only listen to your customers, but also try to connect with them. Listening involves paying close attention to customer needs, anticipating and understanding how you can give your best to deliver a personalized experience and service to the guest.

Effective communication and interpersonal skills are important in all spheres of life. Poor communication in a workplace can lead to misunderstandings and interpersonal issues amongst colleagues, time being wasted or mistakes being made, which can prove to be very costly to an organization.

The capability to communicate effectively with colleagues, guests, and staff is a most important asset in the hospitality industry. Verbal and non-verbal Communication skills are very essential to work and succeed in the hospitality industry and achieve leadership roles, which motivates employees to effectively achieve organizational goals.

Getting a job in this competitive global-environment may be difficult for hospitality students unless they have good communication skills. Hospitality Schools should take effective measures for improving Communication Skills of Hospitality students to increase their employability prospects by including Communication skills as an integral subject in the curriculum of the Hospitality degree program. Training students in Spoken English will also help the students to communicate with each other in English and boost their confidence to communicate effectively with guests.

Students must be well-trained in communications so that they can handle difficult situations, like, guest complaints; listen to guests and resolve the problem promptly. Such matters can be handled smoothly and easily, if an employee has good communication and listening skills.

In today's times, the hospitality industry is looking for young staff who possess good communication skills along with education. An employability enhancement program helps to fill the gap between employees' skills-set and the abilities that organizations are looking for—domain-related skills, personality development, effective communication, work-life balance, skill development using technology, etc. which are significant aspects of employability. This helps students to jump-start their career at any renowned hotel and brighten-up the student's future.

Communication plays a vital role in the employability enhancement process. Employers look for candidates who can present themselves professionally through verbal and non-verbal communication. Communication is essential in increasing employability as it:

- **Helps in structuring one's goals** as one is clear about what one wants to achieve.
- **Promotes motivation and confidence** among employees
- **Helps in making vital decisions regarding tasks or goals.**
- **Alters attitudes towards organizational functions** as a well-informed employee may have a better perspective on things than a less-informed employee.
- **Strengthens employee performance** in various administrative processes, organizational policies that ultimately control management functions.
- **Enhances the ability of effective interactions**

Communication enhances socialization with fellow colleagues, a vital aspect of employability enhancement.

In Hospitality Management and the Human resource sector, communication skills are considered as the key eligibility criteria for selecting any candidate. People believe that

Communication skills can be enhanced by improving their spoken skills. But, Active listening is also essential. You can be a good speaker only when you are an *effective listener*. Non-verbal communication is also an important component of effective communication. Non-verbal communication includes such things as Smiling and making eye contact with a guest, listening to someone, listening actively and in a focused manner, tone of voice, voice quality, body language, position, distance from the person, and body movement. The use of all these types of communications are important in communicating effectively with customers in the Hospitality Industry, and hence, Communication skills are a critical criteria for employability in the service industry.

### Review of Literature

Ashim Wahyuni (2018), states that there is involvement of verbal and non-verbal communication by teachers and students in teaching and learning activities. The quality of learning in class can be improved if teachers able to uses both, verbal and non-verbal communication effectively. That has direct impact on the student's academic and non-academic performance. It is faculty who have better communication skills play important role in educational success.

Tarjani sheth (2017), state the importance of nonverbal communication in corporate world. As the message passed by sender may confused receiver if the non -verbal cues are not clear. There is very less focus given to non-verbal communication while teaching language, also very few techniques which are used to teach non-verbal communication as compared to its importance.

Deepika Phutela (2016), states how non-verbal communication can support or sometime replace verbal communication. The impact on nature of interpersonal communication can be seen differently with the use of Nonverbal communication by people from different cultural background, male and female. The author tries to look into different types of non-verbal communication such as body language, hand movement, facial expressions, and eye contact. Further also explains that how individual tends to rely on signals expressed by non-verbal communication is considered to interpret the lack in communication.

Aarti Prabhu, Prachi Wani (2015), mentioned that English Language proficiency is a basic requirement of hospitality industry, students who wish to take this as career. They have tried to find out the gap between desired and existing standards of English Language proficiency. Joint efforts need to make by all three stakeholders of industry to tackle the issue. Further they state that students confidence level, body language and personality is mainly depend upon English language proficiency.

Ana Cuic Tankovica , Jelena Kapes a and Dragan Benazicb (2022), mentioned that good expressive communication is key to promote tourism products and to please the clientele. The five dimensions of communication namely, Written communication skills, Oral communication skills, Listening communication skills, Digital communication skills, and Non-verbal communication skills proves their existence with the help of proposed scale. The authors have tried to investigate the importance of communication skills for future tourism employees.

Kostic Bobanovic, M. Grzinic, J. (2011), explains how oral and written communication skills are important to the hospitality practitioners at different levels of positions. In tourism business oral communication is more used than written as the service provider must convince their products to the clientele. The authors have studied two different samples such as students of business and tourism and hospitality employees of Croatia. Further they come to know that employees of tourist agency use English language for business purpose whereas students like to use for fun and entertainment factor. They have also noticed that students have influence of American culture and lifestyle.

Dr. Gunjan Jain (2017), states that employability does not only mean by getting a job, but that should also in connection with personal development and ability to be successful in their

chosen area of employment. To enhance employability there a vast need of communication skills. The author tries to highlight how effective communication is an essential factor which helps to increase confidence and recognition of personal achievement which leads to increase the scope of development and claims in a competitive job market.

Anca SIRBU (2015), quotes that language is the means of communication in the society. The need to communicate in society generates existence and the growth of a language and this need evolves and becomes stronger and stronger when one has someone else to communicate. Language is an essential aspect in the expression of culture, lifestyle. It is instrumental in conveying traditions and values related to group identity.

A study done by A. V. Bharathi (2016), tries to find out the writing skills of commerce graduating students and the gap in the existing syllabi of the colleges affiliated to Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kachchh University, Bhuj, India. He states that need to develop curriculum which will help to develop the learner's whole personality. It's the better knowledge of English language will be a one thing that will certainly change the working attitude and improve our employment opportunities. English language proficiency, provides and improve other set of skills like soft skills, presentation skills, and, above all, communication skills.

M. Sarpparaje (2016), mentioned that communication is 'must have' skill for all the graduates who are seeking jobs. It's a skill that develops only with regular dedicated practice. The role of teachers/facilitator is very crucial here to encourage students to participate in debate, discussions and presentations or seminars to develop and polish their oral communication skills.

### **Objective**


- To understand the demographic profile of hospitality students
- To evaluate the importance of communication skills (verbal/ nonverbal) for employability in hospitality industry.
- To identify the measures to be undertaken by the hotel management students and institutes to improve communication skills for increased employability.

### **Data Collection & Data Analysis**

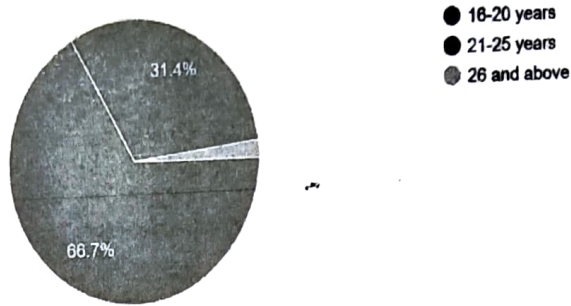
Primary Data: Questionnaires are administered to students and faculty of hospitality institute in Pune city (India) for the purpose of collection of primary data through google forms and results obtained are analyzed. The main focus of the questionnaire is towards evaluating the importance of communication skills (verbal/ nonverbal) for employability in hospitality industry. Also the objective is to identify the measures to be undertaken by the hotel management students and institutes to improve communication skills for increased employability. Secondary data is collected from various online reports, e-newspaper articles. The populations were the students and faculty of hospitality institutes in Pune city. A total sample of 102 hospitality students and 34 faculty in Pune city were selected. The method adopted for sampling was Quota sampling.

### **Data Analysis**

Demographic profile of the students

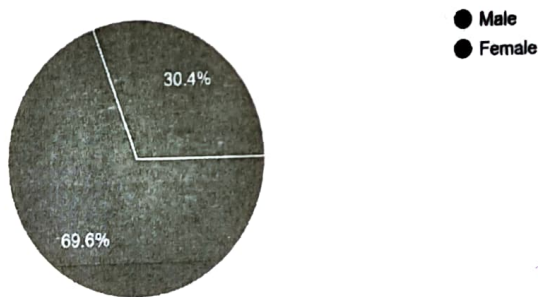
  
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Age  
102 responses




**interpretation:** -This response was taken from different age group. There were 3 different age groups which included 16-20, 21-25, 26 and above.66.7% students are from the age group 16-20 years, 31.4% students are from the age group 21-25 years and 6.9% students are of 26 and above years of age.

Gender  
102 responses

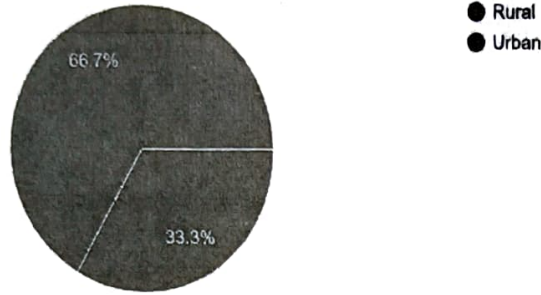


**interpretation:** The pie chart denotes the gender distribution of the students included in the study sample. Among total 102 respondents the proportion of female customers was nearly 30.4% whereas the percentage of male customers was 69.6% respectively. It can be observed from the table that the proportion of male respondents is more than of the female students.

  
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**Place of Residence**

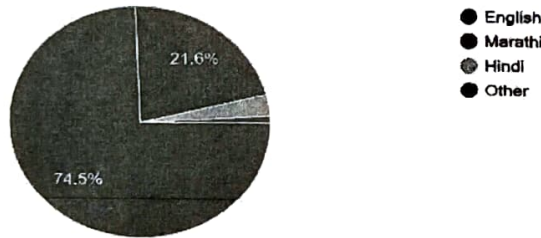
102 responses



**Interpretation:** The above pie chart showcases the place of residence of students. Amongst 102 students 66.7% students are from urban areas while 33.3% are from rural areas.

**Medium of School/ College education**

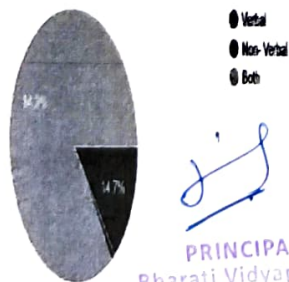
102 responses



**Interpretation:** The above pie chart interprets that 74.5% students are from English medium school/college where as 21.6% are from marathi medium school/college. 3.9% students are from hindi or other medium.

Which according to you is the important form of communication for employability in Hospitality industry?

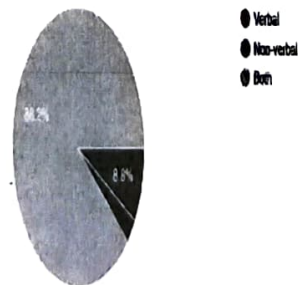
132 responses



Students Perspective

Which according to you is the important form of communication for employability in Hospitality industry?

34 responses

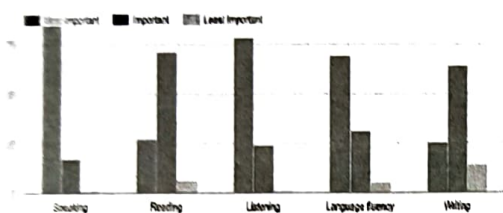


Hospitality institute faculty perspective

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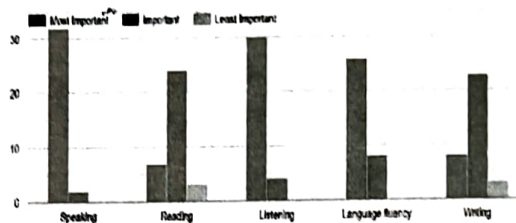
It is fascinating to note that majority of students (84.3 %) and (88.2%) hospitality faculty understand the importance of both forms of communication i.e verbal and nonverbal for employability in hospitality industry. 14.7% students and 8.8% faculty feel only verbal communication is important form of communication for employability and minority( 1%) students and (3%) faculty feel nonverbal form of communication is important for the employability.

How according to you are the following components of verbal communication important for employability in hospitality industry?



Students Perspective

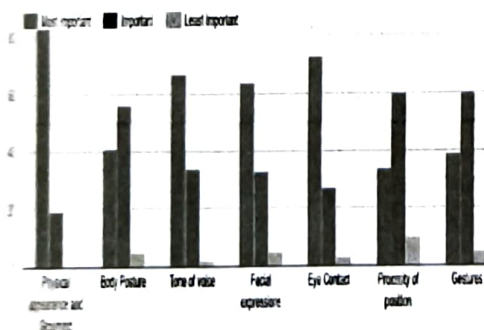
How according to you are the following components of verbal communication important for employability in hospitality industry?



Hospitality institute faculty perspective

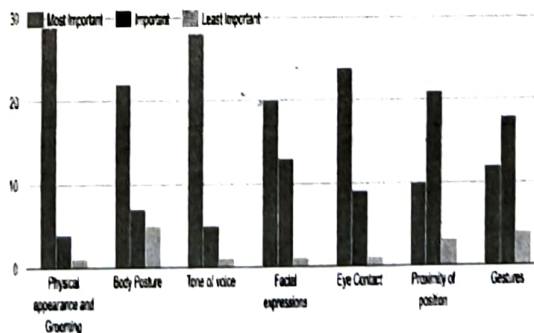
The above graphs reflects the awareness of students and hospitality institute faculty about the importance of verbal communication for employability. It is observed that both the groups feel that speaking skills are most important, (85%) according to students and (93.7%) according to faculty. It is interesting to note that (78%) of students and (88.23%) faculty understand that listening skills is most important in hospitality whereas (71%) of students and (70.5%) faculty believe reading is important. (64%) of students and (67.6%) of faculty think writing skills are important. Hospitality students and faculty believe that language fluency is one of the critical pre-requisites for pursuing a career in Hospitality. A surprising average of (69%) of students and (76.4%) of faculty agree that the fluency of language has a very critical role in a career Hospitality industry.

How according to you are the following components of non-verbal communication important for employability in hospitality industry?



Students Perspective

How according to you are the following components of non-verbal communication important for employability in hospitality industry?

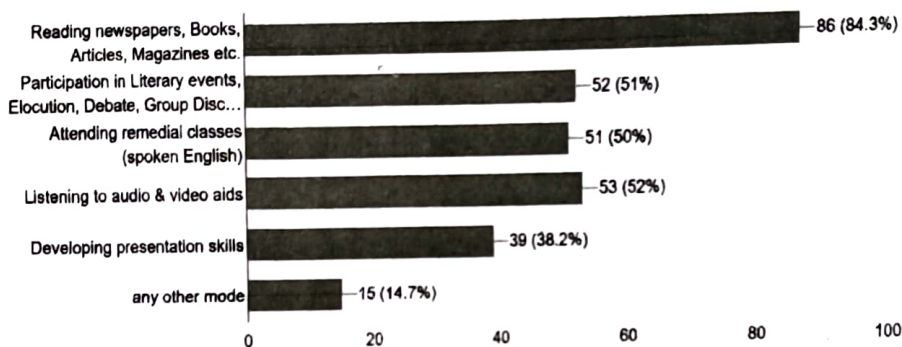


Hospitality institute faculty perspective

The above graphs reflect the view of students and hospitality institute faculty about the importance of non-verbal communication for employability. Most of the students and faculty believe that physical appearance and grooming is most important (83%), whereas average number of students (67%) believe tone of voice and (73%) feel eye contact most important. Facial expression is also most important (64%) understood by students. This is a positive and reflects a possibility of implementation. Proximity (60%), Body posture (56%) and gestures (60%) are important according to students. Hospitality institute faculty understand that tone of voice (82.3%), body posture (64%) and eye contact (70.5%) most important for employability.

### What measures will you adopt to improve your verbal communication?

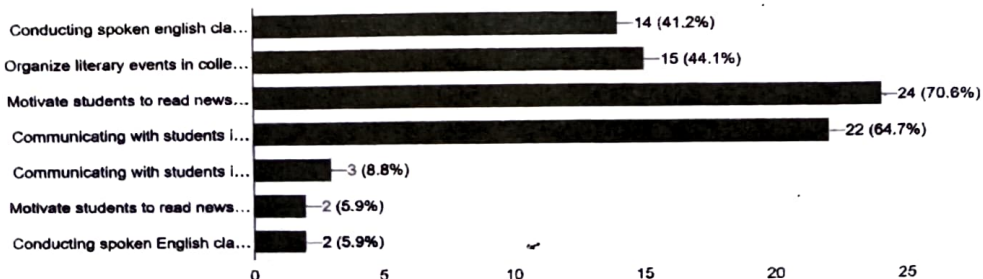
102 responses



Amid the measures preferred by students in order to improve verbal communication, reading newspapers, books, articles, magazines is the most preferred initiative (84.3%) in order to improve verbal communication, followed closely by listening to audio and video aids (52%), participating in literary events (51%) and attending remedial classes (50%). Developing presentation skills is least preferred (38.2%).

### Which according to you is an important measure to improve verbal communication amongst students?

34 responses



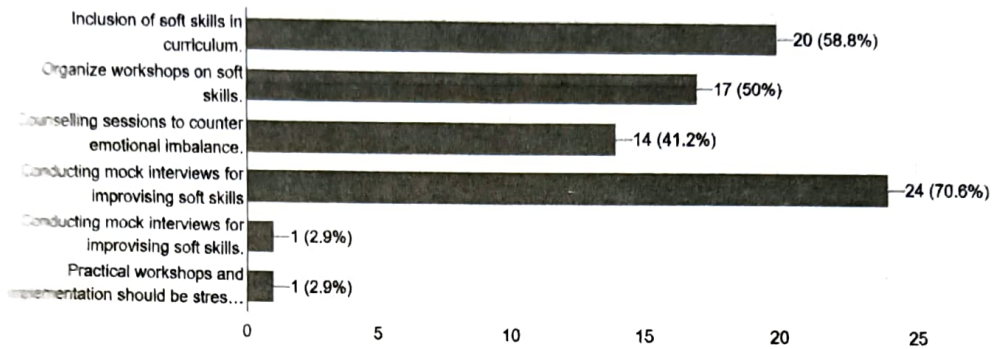
Amongst the activities preferred by faculty in order to improve verbal communication amid students, most preferred initiative in order to improve verbal communication is motivating students to read newspapers, magazines, articles, books (70.6%), followed closely by



communicating with students in English(64.7%). Conducting spoken English classes (41.2%) and organizing literary events in college (44.1%) is least preferred.

Which according to you is an important measure to improve non-verbal communication amongst students?

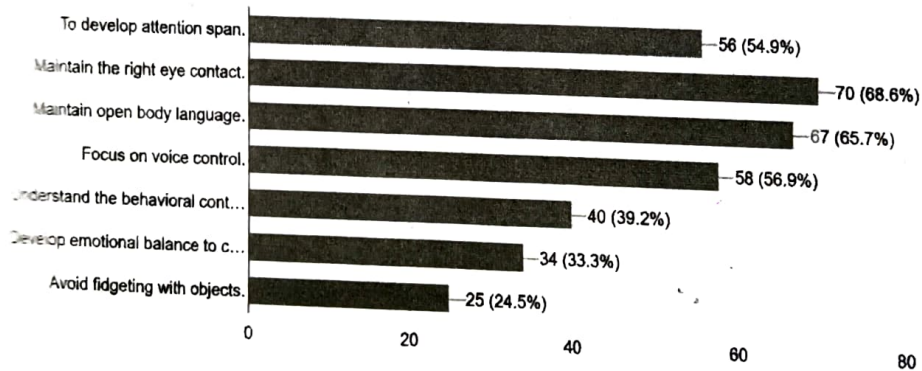
34 responses



Amongst the activities preferred by faculty in order to improve nonverbal communication amid students, most preferred initiative in order to improve nonverbal communication is conducting mock interviews for improvising soft skills (70.6%), followed by inclusion of soft skills in curriculum (58.8%), counseling sessions to counter emotional balance (41.2%). Conducting mock interviews (2.9%) and practical workshops (2.9%) is least preferred.

What measures will you adopt to improve your non verbal communication?

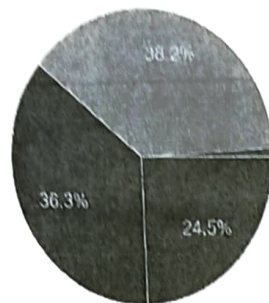
102 responses



Among the measures preferred by students in order to improve nonverbal communication, maintaining eye contact (68.6%) is the most preferred initiative in order to improve nonverbal communication followed by maintaining open body language (65.7%), followed closely by focusing on voice control (56.9%) developing attention span (54.9%), understanding the behavioral content (39.2%) and developing emotional balance (33.3%). To avoid fidgeting with objects is least preferred (24.5%).

How much time you will devote daily for improving your verbal and non-verbal communication?

102 responses



- Less than 30 minutes.
- 30 -60 minutes.
- More than an hour.
- Moore than an hour.

Enumerating the time spent on daily activities towards improving verbal and nonverbal communication, majority (38.2%) of the students will devote more than an hour, followed by 36.3% who spend 30- 60 minutes towards the same. It is observed students spending less than 30 minutes fall in minority (24.5%). The time span can in improving verbal and nonverbal communication be understood to be upto 60 minutes.

### Findings

- Majority of students (84.3 %) and (88.2%) hospitality faculty understand the importance of both forms of communication i.e verbal and nonverbal for employability in hospitality industry.
- Speaking skills are most important (85%) according to students and (93.7%) according to faculty.
- (78%) of students and (88.2%) faculty understand that listening skills is most important in hospitality.
- Most of the students and faculty believe that physical appearance and grooming is most important (83%)
- Most preferred initiative by students in order to improve verbal communication is reading newspapers, books, articles, magazine (84.3%)
- Most preferred activities in order to improve nonverbal communication is conducting mock interviews for improvising soft skills (70.6%)
- Most preferred initiative by faculty in order to improve verbal communication is motivating students to read newspapers, magazines, articles, books (70.6%)
- Measures preferred by students in order to improve nonverbal communication is maintaining eye contact (68.6%)
- Most preferred initiative in order to improve nonverbal communication is maintaining open body language (65.7%)
- Majority (38.2%) of the students will devote more than an hour activities towards improving verbal and nonverbal communication.

### Suggestions & Recommendations

Verbal and nonverbal communication is very important in the hospitality industry for an employee. It helps to face and succeed in an interview. Employers prefer candidates fluent in communication skills, when hiring for a job position in the hospitality industry thus it facilitate to secure a Job. A person with a good hold over his/her communication skills can progress better in a hospitality career. Both forms of communication support to develop and build a good relationship with customers and colleagues and achieve customer satisfaction. Students can

create first impressions with good communication skills and build in confidence as well as develop positive attitude hence the hospitality faculty should put in more efforts. Clarity of communication helps to avoid any misunderstandings and doubts. Effective communication in the hospitality industry starts with active listening. Students need to be motivated and seek activities that help improve their communication skills. Non-verbal communication is also an important component of effective communication. Properly dressed will not only increase your self-confidence but it will also impress and attract other people. Proper grooming and a professional appearance are important to gain respect in the workplace. The way you look and carry yourself creates an impression on the people you work alongside. Tone of voice can not only affect how people perceive but also their willingness to listen as it clarifies and conveys meaning. Measures need to be undertaken by the hotel management students and institutes to improve communication skills for increased employability.

### Future Scope for Research

In line to meet the needs of the hospitality industry and employability of freshly graduated students a training module about verbal and nonverbal communication skills can be formulated for students pursuing degree in Hotel Management.

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