

## THE COMPARISON OF HAIRDRESSER-CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION: THE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION THEMES IN BARBERSHOPS

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays, people cannot communicate effectively in their families and they cannot solve their problems. This lack of communication even is seen in workplaces. People do not want to listen to each other's problems and cannot tell their problems to anybody. When they go to their hairdressers, they get a chance to tell their problems. Hairdressers resemble a therapy center while also being a place for personal care. Thus, people sharing their secrets and problems in hairdressers get rid of their stress. This study consists of the topics discussed in hairdressers. Also, it examines the secrets shared by the customers about their personal lives. At this point, fourteen male barbers and thirteen female hairdressers were interrogated and whether there is difference between the topics discussed at these barbershops were scrutinized. In the end, the similarities and differences in topics were revealed in themes.

**Keywords:** Male barbers, female hairdressers, interpersonal communication, similarities, differences, gender.

### INTRODUCTION

The barber term in Turkish is defined as "the person who deals with cutting, combing and doing hair and beard or the ones who acquires that as a profession, the men's hairdresser, barber". The coiffeur means "hairdresser, barber and beauty parlor" (Canyilmaz, 2009). Hairdressers are defined as "the persons who cut, form, dye and do hair care according to the current fashion trends and pleasure of the client" (Guzel, 2013).

In the study of Ustuner and Thompson on female hairdresser and client relations, it is observed that hairdressers try to establish dominance over their clients through various strategies. In the study, it is presented that women are tied to their hairdressers loyally and they do not change their hairdressers for years ("Sacimi yapabilirsin, arkadasim", 2011).

In the interview which has been published in Hairist.com.tr (2013), Erbil who is an experienced and popular hairdresser in Istanbul states that; "It is an extremely important privilege for you that a client comes to the parlor and especially requests you." In this interview, it is mentioned that the people who used to come for spending time, entertaining, having a talk and socializing have limited time and they desire to be handled practically; the clients of today cannot stand any mistakes than the past and there is a more investigative client profile while they were not used to questioning in the past. It is stated that it is more important to listen than tell; the client psychology should be known well and it should be reflected that the hairdresser tries to make her feel good and by this means it will become possible to keep client flow. Erbil defines himself as "a psychologist with hair design ability" ("Hepimiz bu meslek sayesinde", 2013).

In the news titled as "People also go to beauty parlors for social expectations" according to Ozyurt, "Women inclining towards becoming beautiful aim to become mentally satisfied and meet their

expectations in social relations by making partial changes on their bodies rather than becoming biologically healthier." ("Guzellik salonlarına sosyal", n.d.).

In the studies of Togan et al. (2014a, 2014b), it has been determined that most of the hairdressers do not have sufficient knowledge on self-care and material cleaning and they exhibit wrong behaviors. As a result of the study of Sahin et al. (2009), it has been observed that the women hairdresser staff participated in the study do not have sufficient knowledge and practices on Hepatitis B and other blood-borne diseases.

In the study of Guzel (2013), it has been determined that the most common professional disorder is sleep disorders with 63.8% and the highest value on professional satisfaction is "relations between staff" and the lowest one is "working hours". In the study of Mermer et al. (2015), it is presented that the most common health problem of women hairdressers are related with ergonomics and psychological burden.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to present the topics and shared secrets in hairdressers-client communication under main themes and to discuss the difference of male and female hairdressers obtained by this themes.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited with the accessible male hairdressers working in the city center of Eskisehir who accepted to have an interview. The number of participant hairdressers is fourteen. The study is limited with the opinions of the selected hairdressers and generalizability of results is limited.

### **METHOD**

"In qualitative studies, the data can be gathered by means of in-depth interview, observation, participant observation and log analysis techniques (Wiersma, as cited in Batu et al., 2004). This study has been conducted by semi-structured interview technique. An interview is a conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group for getting information (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). A set of questions are prepared for using in interviews to apply in semi-structured interviews. These questions are directed by the researchers to each interviewee in the same order however the interviewees are allowed to answer as they wish (Gay; Berg, as cited in Batu et al., 2004).

In the interviews conducted for this study, it has been tried to access opinions of hairdressers on the communication of hairdressers with their clients, shared secrets, held topics and their knowledge and experience. Consequently, it is tried to present the topics and shared secrets in male hairdressers-client communication under main themes and sub-themes.

### **Data Collection Tool**

In order to compare the answers of interviewed hairdressers, main interview questions which can be answers to the questions listed in the purposes title of the study have been prepared. The researcher has made a trial of these questions with a hairdresser close to his institution. The sound recordings of the interview have been analyzed by an expert and evaluations on the interviewee and the questions have been done and the interview form has been finalized. The aforementioned form has been applied on the male hairdressers of Eskisehir. Furthermore, an empty space is left at the end of the form where the hairdressers can fill in freely with their opinions, feelings, emotions and recommendations on the issues other than the questions.

### **Determining the Hairdressers Participating in the Study**

In order to determine the hairdressers to be surveyed in the male hairdressers-client communication study, the names of hairdressers in Eskisehir city center have been obtained from the Chamber of

Barbers and Coiffeurs of Eskisehir and surveyors at the helm of the researchers have visited the coiffeurs and requested permission and support for their study.

### Collecting Data

The interviews have been conducted in between 1-15 April 2016 as previously planned in the pre-interviews with the hairdressers. Before, each interview, the researcher has explained the purpose of the study. The researchers and interviewers have jointly visited the hairdressers and recorded the questions and answers of the interviews by a sound recorder by getting consent of them.

### Data Analysis

The data collected for the study has only been subjected to descriptive analysis. Naturally, when a descriptive analysis is done, the data obtained through interviews are presented originally without adding our opinions and comments as researchers.

### Reliability Study

Firstly, the hairdresser was selected and interview printout, questions and considered subtitles were given to a second expert. It has firstly been requested from this expert to determine the statements which can be answers for each question and then replace appropriate answers under subtitles. At the end of this procedure, the answers of related hairdressers registered by the researcher have been compared with the answers and subtitles determined by the expert. The reliability analysis has been examined either for the statements with answer characteristics and subtitles where they were gathered. As a result, the reliability level between the researcher and the expert has been found as 95% for the answers. It has been observed that there is a complete unity in subtitled the answers of the following two hairdressers. For reliability calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Dissensus}} \times 100 \quad \text{formula has been used}$$

The study report has been compiled by combining the tallied answers gathered under particular titles at the left side of the notebook and the bold statements in the computer. The bold statements have been used as direct quotes.

## FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

### Information Related with the Interviewed Hairdressers

While all of the interviewed male hairdressers (14) are men, a few of female hairdressers women; the age average of male hairdressers is around 35, female hairdressers is around 40; and their ages vary from 23 to 46 on male hairdressers, 23-60 on female hairdressers; almost all of male hairdressers are 8 years-primary school graduates while less than half of female hairdressers are same level graduates; most of male and female hairdressers have job experience around 10 and higher years of experience.

### Information on Client Profiles of the Interviewed Hairdressers

While clients of three of the interviewed male hairdressers have been going to the same shop for 5-8 years, two for 9-12 years, four for 13-16 years, one for 17-20 years, two for 21-24 years and two for 25 years and more; clients of four of the interviewed female hairdressers have been going to the same shop for 2-5 years, two for 9-12 years, two for 13-16 years, one for 17-20 years, and four for 25 years and more. Almost all the male and female hairdressers serve 16 and more old clients. While the monthly visit frequency of old customers has been indicated by two of the male hairdressers as once, eight male hairdresser twice, two male hairdresser thrice, two male hairdresser four times and more; by eight of the female hairdressers as once, one female hairdresser twice, one female hairdresser thrice, three female hairdresser four times and more. If, the time the old clients spend at the shop is analyzed, five of male hairdresser have mentioned as the lowest time spent by their

clients at the shop as between 10-20 minutes and nine of them as between 20-30 minutes, six of female hairdressers as between 10-20 minutes and seven of them as more than 20 minutes; most of the male hairdressers have mentioned that the highest time spent by their clients at the shop as around 1-2 hours, most of the female hairdressers as 3 hours and more. If, the income levels of secret sharing clients are analyzed, while it is observed that most of male hairdressers have secret sharing clients from the middle income level, most of female hairdressers have secret sharing clients from the middle and higher income level. If, the age range of secret sharing clients is analyzed, it has been mentioned by most of male hairdressers that these clients are around 20-35, most of female hairdressers have mentioned that they are around 20-40. If, the professional status of secret sharing clients is analyzed, it has been mentioned by eight male and eight female hairdressers that these clients have a profession while they do not know what they are, one male and one female hairdresser as university students, three male hairdressers as factory workers, one male hairdresser as public servants, one male hairdresser as manufacturers, three female hairdressers as housewives and one female hairdresser as academics. If, the marital status of the secret sharing clients is considered, it has been stated by eight male and eight female hairdresser that they are married and five male hairdressers and three female hairdressers have mentioned that they are single and one male and two female hairdressers have mentioned that he has clients sharing secrets from all marital status (married, single or divorced).

#### **Information on Hairdresser-Client Communication**

When, the information on secret sharing client is asked, all fourteen male and thirteen hairdressers mention that their clients share secrets with them. With regards to the number of secret sharing clients, four male and two female hairdressers mentioned that they have 5 and fewer clients sharing their secrets with them, four male and six female hairdressers mentioned 10-15 clients, two male and four female hairdressers mentioned 20-25 clients, four male hairdressers mentioned 40 and more clients. While all of the male hairdressers consider the cause why their clients share their secrets with them as sincerity/being close, twelve as confidence, twelve as therapy/we listen to their problems and comfort them, nine as friendship/companionship, and one as "it makes more sense to tell foreign"; one female hairdresser as sincerity/being close, six as confidence, one as therapy, two as friendship, two as touch/contact and one as habit of long years. The question on whether their secret sharing clients warn them not to share their secret with anyone else is answered by 7 male and 10 female hairdressers as "no", 2 male and 2 female hairdressers as "yes" and 5 male hairdressers as "very rare". Almost all the male and female hairdressers have mentioned that their secret sharing clients ask for advice related with their secrets.

#### **Information on Characteristics of Shared Communication**

If, the subjects of communication between hairdressers and client are analyzed, it draws attention that the secrets on family/relation issues for 14 times on male hairdressers and 11 times on female hairdressers girlfriend, lover, relationship, love, private life; for 12 times on male hairdressers marriage; for 5 times on male hairdressers sex life and for 1 time complain about women are shared. Other than these, it is observed that the secrets on the business life are shared for 6 times on male 5 times on female hairdressers; everything about life for 4 times, money for 3 times, politics for 1 time, football for 1 time, education for 1 time and fighting with friends for 1 time on male hairdressers. Almost all male and female hairdressers mentioned that their clients complain about their lives. The subjects which their clients complain about are indicated as 8 times lover/girlfriend (on male hairdressers), 6 times on male 4 times on female hairdressers family members, 5 times on male and 3 times on female hairdressers complaints about his spouse/hardships of marriage and children, 4 times on male 6 times on female hairdressers financial issues/money; 1 time longing for family, 7 times general working life, 2 times his hardship of work, 2 times low wage, 1 time long working hours, 5 times general life problems, 2 times education (collage, courses and academics) and 1 time condition of Turkey on male hairdressers. If, the depth of communication shared between hairdressers-clients is analyzed; 9 male 7 female hairdressers have mentioned that they have clients sharing superficially, 5 male and 2 female hairdressers have mentioned that they have customers sharing in detail. If, the continuity of subjects communicated between hairdresser-client dialogues is

considered; 9 male and 6 female hairdressers have replied the question whether the subjects on shared secrets are reopened as "yes", 2 male and 6 female hairdressers have replied as "no" and 3 male hairdressers have replied as "rare". Related with follow-up of the shared communications, 10 male and 11 female hairdressers have mentioned that they ask questions to their clients on previously shared subjects, 3 male and 2 female hairdressers have replied "no".

### **Information on Keeping/Sharing Secret Attitudes of Hairdressers**

Eight male ten female hairdressers have replied the question on whether they share the secrets shared by their clients with other clients as "no, I do not", six male and three female hairdressers have replied as "yes, but I share examples without mentioning any name". Eight male and six female hairdressers have replied the question on whether they share the secrets shared by their clients at other places as "no, I do not", six male and seven female hairdressers have replied as "yes, but I share an examples without mentioning any name". Ten male and thirteen female hairdressers replied the question whether they share the secrets shared by their clients on phone as "no, I do not", one male hairdresser has replied as "yes, I do", three male hairdressers have replied as "yes, but I share an examples without mentioning any name".

### **Considerations of Hairdressers about their Profession**

The male and female hairdressers who had negative attitudes towards sharing problems with their customers, reported that they were tired of listening to others' problems; they listened to their customers' problems superficially; their customers regarded them as a center of therapy; and that their customers did not listen to their own problems. The male hairdressers stated that they went on a picnic or drank beer to forget about their problems and one of the barbers said he talked about his problems to himself in the mirror. The female hairdressers have mentioned that their clients show them as therapy centers even their clients transfer all their problems and complaints to them as if they are "garbage containers" and they cannot share their complaints and problems with their clients as they do not listen or do not want to listen the hairdressers and they cannot be relieved.

While it is observed that female hairdressers do not have any positive perspective on problem sharing; some of male hairdressers had good relationships with their customers in terms of information sharing, one barber was in contact with their customers, one barber thought he started to learn human psychology, and that one barber said he helped a lot of people overcome their psychological problems.

When, it comes to professional evaluations as a final finding; most of the male and female hairdressers have indicated that they are not satisfied with their profession and it only makes them exhausted, while 3 hairdressers have mentioned that "thanks to God, I earn well and I am happy with my profession", "It makes me happy to make people beautiful and happy".

## **RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

While there are important findings on hygiene issue, information on hygiene is rarely observed in the interviews with male and female hairdressers. Gokdag and Unugur (2016) consider that this can be related with cultural characteristics of Turkey.

In a country where there are so many martyrs, several bombing and explosions and political polarization, it draws attention as an interesting finding that clients do not talk about political issues. We can explain this issue by pathological grief. Instead of normal grief reactions, unexpected, exaggerated or extremely extended reactions or unresponsiveness might be developed; the reality of loss is not accepted (Bildik, 2013). People in pathological grief try to cover the facts making them uncomfortable and not to think about them. By this way, an incident is presumed as not existing and denied; in other words people write off the fact of terror, life-threatening situation, bombing and martyrs and ignore them as they create extreme sadness and stress. In addition to this; if Turkish culture is considered, women prefer their hairdressers as a means of therapy for blowing off their

steam and making them more beautiful; in this sense, they do not feel it necessary to share their political views and opinions.

In Turkey, while women go to a hairdresser to relax, shopping and going to a hairdresser are usual methods for women (Gokdag & Unugur, 2016), men go to a barber for a hair-cut on special days when they really need to go (religious festivals, job interviews, birthdays, marriage, meeting one's darling). Women also go to hairdressers for becoming more beautiful, looking beautiful, refreshing their self-confidence, making a change and relieving and they also want to try a new hair model, a different hair color and make a change when they want to draw attention, hassle with their lovers/husbands, think they are cheated and etc.

Men are extremely conservative about changing their barbers. They do not want to change their barbers. Men are also conservative about their hair styles, and they thus prefer the same style. They think their own barber knows their own hair styles. Therefore, they do not have to explain their hair style again and again. It can be said that in Turkey, women go hairdressers for satisfying their therapy needs and they become loyal to the same hairdresser for a long time. Even, in some resources, there are details that women share their privacy in detail, according to the findings of this study, women share several issues with their hairdressers while they usually share superficially, they share just for blowing off their steam and they do not expect their hairdressers to develop solutions for them. Moreover, if their hairdresser is not from their gender, the things they share are restricted, decreased or they tell their experiences as if another person experiences such issues. Consequently, it is not expected that hairdressers pay attention to the persons in the secret related incident.

When men come together, the most frequent subject they talk about is related to the opposite sex (love, sex, beloved, dating and so on). However, as an interesting finding, in Turkish culture, they do not talk about their relatives, wives, sisters or mothers because talking about sexual subjects in relation to women they love in their so close environment is considered by men to be an issue of honor and virtue. Therefore, talks about these issues are likely to lead to arguments, crisis and even to murder. Other than these, women prefer not to talk about sexual acts and etc. issues with hairdressers of opposite sex as they think that they will be accused of shameful acts and the boundaries between them and their hairdresser will be removed and this will cause sauciness.

In Turkey, women institutionalize sharing their secrets with each other usually in their communes, gatherings and etc., they share their feelings more than men and they are more open to oral communication than men. Therefore, it is not surprising that women share their secrets with each other and their hairdressers.

Moreover, it is an interesting finding that child problems are not communicated at all; however if it is considered that women go to hairdressers for being cared and relieving, it can be said that they might not want to communicate child problems and become angry again.

As a result of the study supporting the study of Gokdag and Unugur (2016); it is observed that hairdressers see their profession "exhausting" due to ergonomic conditions, long working hours and listening problems and complaints of their clients, even they provide therapy services to their clients they cannot be relieved by telling their problems with their clients.

Briefly, according to the resources and studies in the literature, it can be indicated that different client-hairdresser relations can be developed in different cultures. This study is a pioneer for other researchers and studies in this field and within the context of wider cultural studies; it is recommended to expand the study for comparing the clients of male hairdressers with the clients of female hairdressers.



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