

Enhancing Interpersonal Communication: Lessons from '*Qaulan Sadidan*' in the Quran

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Abstract

As humans, we tend to commit mistakes while dealing with people in our daily life, especially by using inappropriate communication and thus can compromise our rapport and relationship with others. It is undeniable that excellent human interactions will require effective communication as humans need to inform, express feelings, imagine, influence, and meet social expectations on a daily basis. Therefore, this article aims to investigate effective

communication in human interactions based on the phrase of “Qaulan Sadidan” in the Quran. The phrase was revealed twice in two places: Surah al-Nisa’ verse 9 and Surah al-Ahzab, verse 70. In terms of understanding exegesis of the Quranic verses, the researchers select books from five medieval and contemporary scholars namely Tafsir al-Jalalayn by Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, Tafsir al-Quran al-‘Adzim by Ibn Kathir, Jami’ al-Bayan fi Ta’wil al-Quran by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Safwat al-Tafasir by Muhammad Ali al-Sabuni and Al-Kashshaf ‘an Haqa’iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil by al-Zamakhshari. The researchers then extend the understanding of those verses to study the correlation of “Qaulan Sadidan” with effective communication in the context of human interactions. This study adopts inductive and analytical study where two Quranic verses from Surah al-Nisa’ and Surah al-Ahzab will be used and analysed to explore the deep and detailed meaning of the “Qaulan Sadidan” before analysing the correlation of “Qaulan Sadidan” with effective communication. It is obtained that the opinions of the Muslim scholars vary in terms of describing the meaning of “Qaulan Sadidan” and “Qaulan Sadidan” with effective communication can be adopted by individuals in their daily life interactions. Furthermore, it also can be concluded from both verses that by using Qaulan Sadidan in communication, Muslims will achieve a great attainment or “fawz ‘adzim” from Allah. These important findings eventually lead to the formation of a conceptual framework for effective communication based on those two Quranic verses.

Keywords: Effective, Communication, Qaulan Sadidan, Human Interactions.

Introduction

Allah created man with a basic function to communicate. Allah says in Surah al-Rahman, “He has taught him to talk (and understand)” (Qur’ān 55:4). Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) used both written and oral communication in conveying the revelation and messages of Islam to his ummah. He used written communication where information had to be recorded for future use and reference and used oral communication where information had to be communicated vis-à-vis to his people. The ability to communicate effectively is vital to convey thoughts and visions to people. It helps provide directions and carry out synchronization. Without communication, there is no way to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Thus, communication becomes much more important when people are on a mission or need to achieve a goal. Without a means to communicate, people will stand isolated.

Methodology

This study adopts a contextual approach through inductive textual analysis. Two Quranic verses from Surah al-Nisa’ and Surah al-Ahzab will be used as the premier source to explore the deep and detailed meaning of the “*Qaulan Sadidan*” or the true speech concept. Both Surah al-Nisa’ and Surah al-Ahzab are classified as Surah Madaniyyah. There are several opinions regarding the definition of the Surah Madaniyyah or Madani chapters based on these three main criterias: place of revelation, time of revelation and *mukhatab* or the people who are being referred to (M. Agus Kurniawan & Ahmad Adebisi, 2022). In terms of revelation place, if the Surah was revealed in Madinah, it is considered as Surah Madaniyyah, whereas some scholars believe that Surah Madaniyyah or are the Surah that was revealed after the hijrah even though it was descended in Mecca. The last criterion is if the mukhatab in the Surah is the people of Madinah, then the Surah is Madaniyyah.

For this article, detailed readings of verse 9 from Surah al-Nisa’ and verse 70 from Surah al-Ahzab will be carried out. It is based on the concept of inductive analysis where the

researcher begins with “*Qaulan Sadidan*” and allows the correlation of effective communication in human interactions to emerge from the analysis.

The analysis of the two verses will concentrate upon the exegeses from the main reliable sources, including textual analysis together with the contextual approach in analysing the verses. These exegeses are derived from five medieval and contemporary scholars; Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Muhammad Ali al-Sabuni and al-Zamakhshari. The causes of revelation of these Quranic verses (*Asbab al-Nuzul*) will be referred to in determining the background event or incident of the verses. Besides, it is hoped that a conceptual framework of effective communication can be formed from these two verses.

What is Communication?

The word ‘communication’ derives from the Latin word *communicare*, which means to share, impart, or make common. How well we communicate is often determined by the ease of sharing or imparting information or finding common ground with other people (Harvey, 2010). Harvey (2010) defines communication as an exchange of messages between two people or two groups of people. A person with a good communication skill able to attract the attention of listeners or audience for hours and can influence their thoughts and minds to make changes in life.

Moreover, communication can be categorised into two major types: verbal and nonverbal. Nonverbal communication is a means of communication without using words. Harvey (2010) suggests that nonverbal communication probably accounts for over 80 per cent of our communication whereas the spoken word may account for as little as 7 per cent. A look can often reveal our thoughts more accurately than words can. Without realizing or not, humans constantly communicating nonverbally, such as by the way they look, gesture, stand, sit, smile, frown, and dress themselves. Hence, this magnifies the importance of nonverbal communication in any study of communication. Action speaks louder than words. If someone says he has time to talk to you yet continues what he is doing: scrolling and replying to messages on the phone, and checking the time at his watch, it is unlikely for us to believe his verbal message. Most people, when confronted by such contradictory signs, believe the nonverbal language.

According to Pfeiffer (1973), any communication always involves two kinds of meanings: the content message and the relationship message. We hear not only what people say to us, but also implications about our mutual relationship. If we are so engrossed in identifying cues about the latter, we may tamper the content message gravely or lose it altogether. Effective communication occurs when both messages are clearly perceptible, not confusing or distracting the other.

In addition, there some major characteristics for a communication to be effective. The characteristics of effective communication are as follows (Pfeiffer, 1973):

1. It should be carried out in a two-way communication. Ideas, opinions, values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings move steadily and freely from one person to another.
2. It is indicated by active listening. People hold responsibility for what they hear – accepting, clarifying, and checking the meaning, content, and intent of what the other person says.
3. It makes use of effective feedback. Each person not only listens actively, but also responds to the other person by saying that person what he or she is hearing. The process of feedback tests whether what was heard is what was intended.

4. It is not stressful. Communication is not effective if people are concerned that they are not communicating; when this happens, it is a key that the communication is not functioning properly.
5. It is clear and not hindered by mixed or contradictory messages. Such messages, whether verbal, nonverbal, or symbolic, serve to confuse the content of the communication. In other words, communication is effective when it is direct.

Effective communication involves various skills, including nonverbal communication, active listening, emotional awareness, and the ability to manage stress (Virtual Lab School, n.d). Besides, communication can also be achieved through many ways such as spoken language, facial expressions, gestures, movements, postures, touch, pictures, images, and written symbols (Virtual Lab School, n.d). Regardless of the method being used, effective communication can help support and improve relationships, teamwork, decision-making and problem solving.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Islam, the Qur'an mentions communication as a human nature and provides a key concept related to it (Surah al-Rahman, 55: 1-4). ((Allah)) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence).

Islam teaches its people to use gentle and kind words when communicating with others, even in difficult situations. Muslims should communicate in a way that prevents themselves from causing harm to others. Communication in Islam involve refraining oneself from gossip and backbiting. The Quran strongly emphasizes good communication, and it can be comprehended from verse 12, Surah al-Hujurat:

"O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful" (Quran, 49:12). Gossip and backbiting are considered serious sins in Islam, and they can cause great harm to individuals and relationships.

Besides that, Muh. Syawir Dahlan (2014) mentions that Al-Syaukani defines "*al-bayan*" in verse 4 as the ability to communicate as well as states that "*al-qaul*" is one of the keywords for communication in the Quran. Based on the keyword of "*al-qaul*", this study attempts to shed light on the phrase of "*Qaulan Sadidan*" in Surah al-Nisaa' and Surah al-Ahzab to grasp their meanings and relate them with effective communication in human interactions.

Analysis

Qaulan Sadidan in Surah al-Nisa', verse 9

The first verse chosen for analysis, as shown above, is a pertinent reminder for Muslims especially the executors of will and guardians of the orphans to have taqwa of Allah and to enjoy the good and prevent the evil of someone who is on their deathbed.

This verse can be related to the time when the Messenger of Allah visited Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas during an illness he suffered from (Al-Bukhari, 1422H).

Narrated Sa'd:

Allah's Apostle came to visit me during my ailment which had been aggravated during Hajjat al-Wada'. I said to him, "You see how sick I am. I have much property but have no heir except my only daughter. May I give two thirds of my property in charity?" He said, "No." I said, "Half of it?" He said, "No." I said, "One third?" He said, "One third is too much, for to leave your heirs rich is better than to leave them poor, begging of others. Nothing you spend seeking

Allah's pleasure, but you shall get a reward for it, even for what you put in the mouth of your wife."

Furthermore, below are exegeses derived from five medieval and contemporary scholars; Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Muhammad Ali al-Sabuni and al-Zamakhshari regarding the verse 9 from Surah al-Nisa':

i) Tafsir al-Jalalayn (Al-Tafsir, 2021)

Let them fear let them be concerned for the orphans those who if they are about to leave behind them that is after their death weak offspring young children would be afraid for them; that they be ruined; let them fear God in the matter concerning orphans and let them give what they would love for their own offspring after their death; and speak to the one approached by death pertinent words the right words by enjoining him to give as voluntary almsgiving no more than the third of the inheritance and leave the remainder for the ones inheriting so that they do not end up as dependants.

ii) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Word of Allah, 2023)

Let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left weak offspring behind. So, let them have Taqwa of Allah and speak truthfully.

iii) Tafsir al-Tabari (Al-Tabari, 2000)

It was reported from Qatadah that the executors or guardians should enjoin the one approaching by death with justice and perfect worship and prevent him from injustice and oppression in his will and let them have the same fear and concern as they would have for their own if they had left weak offspring behind.

iv) Safwat al-Tafasir (Al-Sabuni, 1997)

The verse was revealed down as a reminder for the guardians to be concern of their weak offspring leaving behind and the wellbeing of the offspring, and they should treat the orphans under their stewardship just as they want their children to be treated after their death. Therefore, let them fear Allah in the matter of the orphans and tell them the words of kindness and tenderness as would they say to their children.

v) Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil (Al-Zamakhshari, 1407H)

They should fear Allah for those in their stewardship who are orphaned and have mercy upon the orphans, just as their fear for their offspring if they leave the offspring vulnerable and pity the orphans by contemplating and relating to themselves so as not to be emboldened in their conduct other than compassion and mercy...And the good word from the guardians are: to not hurt the orphans and speak to them as they would speak to their children in a good manner and a hearty welcome, and call them with oh my dearest child, and oh my child. And the good word from the people who visit someone on their deathbed is to say to him if he wants to make a will: Do not exceed the proper bounds in your will so that your children do not fall prey on your transgression, just as the saying of the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him to Sa'd: "...for it is better for you to leave your offspring wealthy than to leave them poor, asking others for help".

Tafsir al-Jalalayn	Speak with pertinent and right words
Tafsir Ibn Kathir	Speak truthfully
Tafsir al-Tabari	Speak to someone on their deathbed by enjoining them with justice and perfect worship and preventing them from injustice and oppression
Safwat al-Tafasir	Tell them the words of kindness and tenderness
Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil	<p>the good word from the guardians: speak to the orphans in a good manner and a hearty welcome, and call them with oh my dearest child, and oh my child</p> <p>the good word from the people who visit someone on their deathbed: say to him if he wants to make a will: Do not exceed the proper bounds in your will so that your children do not fall prey on your transgression</p>

Figure 1: Exegeses of Surah al-Nisa', verse 9

Qaulan Sadidan in Surah al-Taubah, verse 70

i) Tafsir al-Jalalayn (Al-Tafsir, 2021)

O you who believe fear God and speak words of integrity what is proper.

ii) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Word of Allah, 2023)

O you who believe! Have Taqwa of Allah and speak (always) the truth.

iii) Tafsir al-Tabari (Al-Tabari, 2000)

The Almighty says: "O those who believed God and His Messenger, fear Allah so as not to disobey Him, otherwise you deserve His punishment. His saying of (speak true speech) means: Speak about the Messenger of God and the believers, intentionally and impermissibly, truly, and not falsely. According to Qatadah, His saying of (Fear Allah and speak the right words) means justice.

iv) Safwat al-Tafasir (Al-Sabuni, 1997)

Become conscious of God in all your words and actions and say straight words that are pleasing to God.

v) Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil (Al-Zamakhshari, 1407H)

Al-Zamakhshari defines qaulan sadidan as proper speech which aims at the truth and correctness, and it also means speaking with justice. The truth and correctness are similar with someone who directs his arrow in the direction of the shot if he does not bend it from its mark.

The meaning of this verse according to al-Zamakhshari is become conscious of God in guarding your tongues, and measuring your words, for if you do that, God will grant you the utmost request which is the acceptance and reward of your good deeds, forgiveness of your bad deeds and expiation of your sins.

Tafsir al-Jalalayn	Speak words of integrity what is proper
Tafsir Ibn Kathir	Speak (always) the truth
Tafsir al-Tabari	Speak about the Messenger of God and the believers, intentionally and impermissibly, truly, and not falsely. According to Qatadah, His saying of (Fear Allah and speak the right words) means justice.
Safwat al-Tafasir	say straight words that are pleasing to God
Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghawamidh al-Tanzil	proper speech which aims at the truth and correctness, and it also means speaking with justice

Figure 2: Exegeses of Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 70

Discussion

After analysis verse of Quran and its interpretation according to famous interpreters below going to explain final discussion.

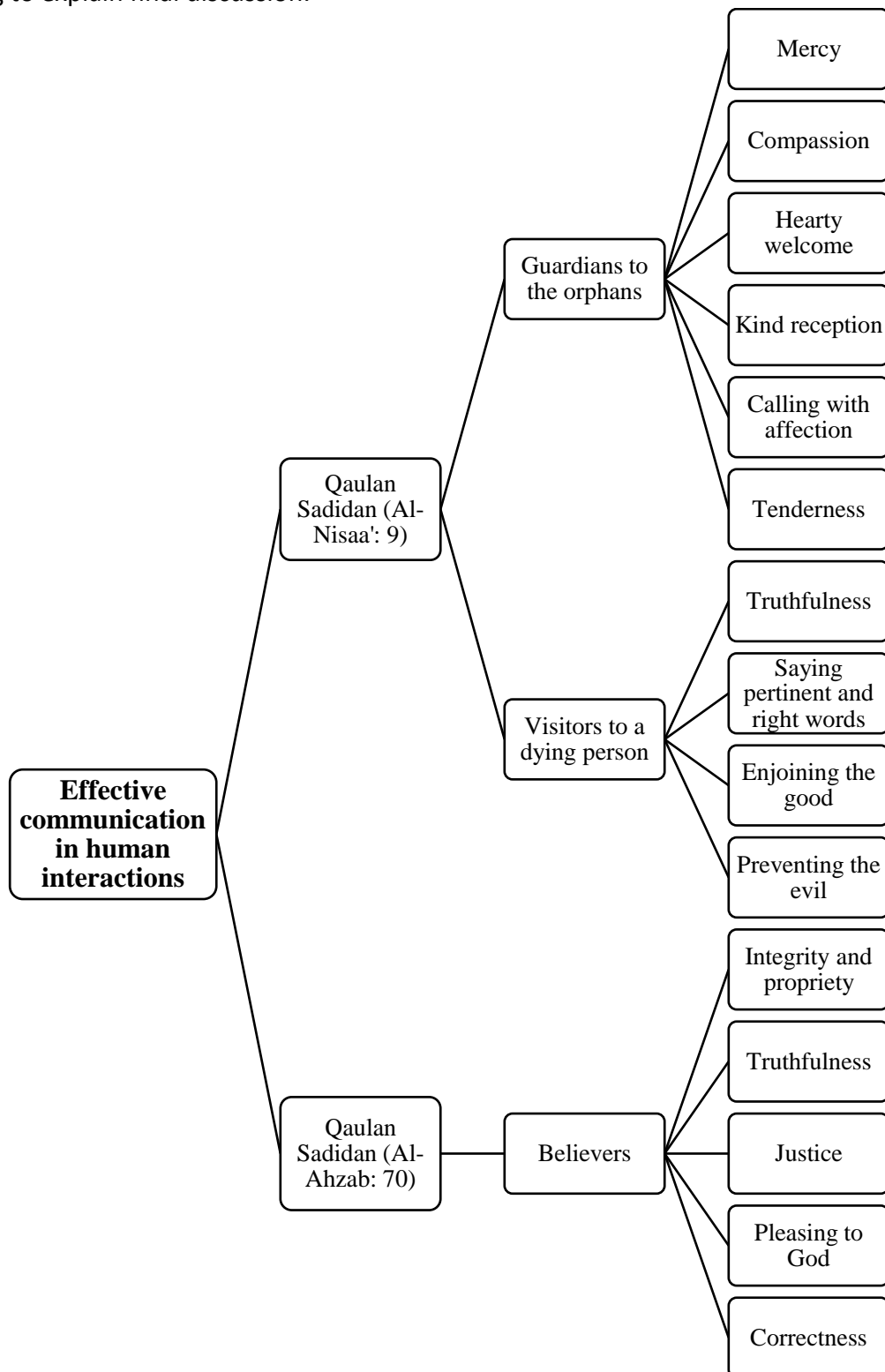


Figure 3: Conceptual framework of effective communication in human interactions based on *Qaulan Sadidan* in Al-Quran

The diagram of the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3 illustrates effective communication based on *Qaulan Sadidan*; which derived from two verses: Surah al-Nisa' and Surah al-Ahzab. It is found that the *mukhatab* of verse 9 in Surah al-Nisa' can be divided into two categories as mentioned by al-Tabari and al-Zamakhshari.

The first category refers to the guardians who are entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the orphans. They are asked to communicate effectively with the orphans in a merciful, compassionate, heartfelt welcome, kindly reception, and tender manner. Besides, the guardians are also advised to call the unfortunate orphans with affection like my dearest child and treat them well just like they would treat their own children.

Furthermore, the second category refers to the visitors of a dying person. Allah urges the visitors to communicate with a dying person effectively by saying pertinent and right words. They should also include their communication with enjoining the good and preventing the evil by sincerely advising the dying person to observe fairness in his will and prohibiting him earnestly from making a will that will be detrimental to his family after his death.

It can also be concluded that *Qaulan Sadida* is a word that must not only be rightful but also honest in its delivery. Communicating effectively entails honesty as the prime element because a trusting relationship is not possible without honesty. Verse 9 of Surah al-Nisa' elaborates the way of communicating with orphans effectively such as choosing the right words when dealing with them and not only providing information correctly but also appropriately. When there is a need to scold them, it should be done with the correct and constructive words so as to rectify their mistakes and also build them up. Hilda Ainissyifa et al. (2022) elucidate that this verse refers to the content of the conversation that is related to a sense of worry, which when viewed psychologically it is a part and parcel of a human experience to feel the need for security.

Moreover, in order to fully grasp the meaning of verse 9, it is of great importance to note that verse 7 until 14 of Surah al-Nisa' are related to the rules of inheritance or *al-Faraid* (Al-Tabari, 2000). After mentioning the ruling of dividing the inheritance, then Allah continues to mention about the good rewards of obeying His order and severe threats of transgressing it in verse 13 and 14. Allah says:

These are the limits [set by] Allāh, and whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger will be admitted by Him to gardens [in Paradise] under which rivers flow, abiding eternally therein; and that is the great attainment. And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger and transgresses His limits – He will put him into the Fire to abide eternally therein, and he will have a humiliating punishment.

Allah will reward those who obeys His limits and His messenger including people who communicate with the orphans and dying people rightfully and appropriately with a great attainment, which is gardens in Paradise under which rivers flow, whereas whoever transgresses His limits and disobeys His messenger will abide the Hell eternally and the person will have a humiliating retribution.

On the other hand, in Surah al-Ahzab verse 70, believers are implored to communicate effectively by demonstrating integrity and propriety, truthfulness, justice, pleasing to Allah, as well as correctness. The verse is built on the prohibition of what harms the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and on the command to fear Allah Almighty in guarding the tongue, so that the prohibition and the command become synonymous for them. The believers also should reflect the meaning of this verse by avoiding themselves from doing something that may harm the Messenger and taking heed by not following the deeds of Bani Isra'il in the story of Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:69).

O believers! Do not be like those who slandered Moses, but Allah cleared him of what they said. And he was honourable in the sight of Allah.

It is also worth mentioning that effective communication in verse 70 will result to the reform of deeds and expiation of sins as mentioned in the following verse (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:71):

He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment.

It is also found from verse 71 that whoever obeys Allah and His messenger has certainly achieved a great attainment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reward of communicating effectively by saying *Qaulan Sadidan* in both places; Surah al-Nisa' verse 9 and Surah al-Ahzab verse 70 is getting a great attainment or *fawz 'adzim*.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this study investigates effective communication in human interactions based on the *Qaulan Sadidan* concept in Surah al-Nisa' verse 9 and Surah al-Ahzab verse 70. The *Qaulan Sadidan* concept is in line and studied with the perspective of effective communication so that this concept can be adapted properly by Muslims in their daily interactions. It is concluded that they should communicate effectively with others, such as family members, spouses, children, colleagues, and neighbors in a merciful, compassionate, heartfelt welcome, kindly reception, and tender manner. Just like a guardian should communicate with the orphans and visitors should communicate with a dying person effectively by saying pertinent and right words, human beings especially Muslims should communicate effectively by using *Qaulan Sadidan* in their interactions with others. In addition, the Muslim ummah should also include in their effective communication with others by enjoining the good and preventing the evil just like the visitors sincerely advising the dying person to observe fairness in his will and prohibiting him earnestly from making a will that will be detrimental to his family after his death.

It is also suggested that there are five major characteristics of an effective communication for humans to take into consideration. These characteristics are it should be carried out in a two-way communication, it is indicated by active listening, it makes use of positive feedback, it is not stressful, and it is clear and not hindered by mixed or contradictory messages. If all individuals take these characteristics into consideration in their daily interactions with others, effective communication can be easily adapted. Getting or rendering support, improving relationships, teamwork, decision-making and problem solving are also some of the goals that can be achieved through effective communication.

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