Chapter 4. Phase I: Semi-Structured Interviews with Target Population

The first phase of the present study (Phase-I) involved interviewing media persons to get an insight about the media field and its communication requirements. This phase was necessitated in light of the fact that prior studies in the field of subordinate-superior communication are rare; media field has only attracted scarce attention from management scholars. Moreover, the theoretical foundation on which the present study rests, is based on literature that has its origins in western societies; therefore, the model needed to be verified to attend cross-cultural concerns. Thus, Phase I was devoted to understanding if the theoretical foundation (trait situation interaction model) on which the present study is based, needed any serious consideration. The interviews were also helpful in exercising a feasibility test of the possibility of conducting a large scale fieldwork based study. Based on my interactions with the media persons, who took part in the interview process, it was found that the trait situation interaction model did not need any serious reworking.

A total of twenty-nine media persons were approached, from whom twenty five interviews were recorded. There were four instances when media persons refused to be interviewed: while two refusals cited management problems, one of the respondents approached cited lack of time for a formal interview process; another one favored the whole interaction to be off the record. All in all, the interview processes went smoothly with many of the interviews preceded by long informal interactions that were also a rich source of data, though off the record. Although the interviews did not follow any strict pattern, a semi-structured format (Appendix 13.1) acted as a guide.

The total data collected comprised of semi-structured interviews with media persons representing both print as well as broadcast media. In terms of institutional representation, the respondents were employees of six different media organizations, viz. Prabhat Khabar (Patna), Hindustan Times (Patna), ETV (Patna), Times Now (Patna), Sahara Samay (Noida), and Aaj Tak (Delhi); the brackets indicate the city/state where the interviews took place. In all, twenty-five interviews were recorded and transcribed. The total recording lasted for close to five hours: the recordings were further transcribed to close to fifty-thousand words. While seventeen respondents
represented print journalism (nine of them working with Hindi print media and the rest eight with English print media), eight represented broadcast media.

The average total experience of the respondents was fourteen years: the respondents were working with their current organization for an average of seven years. In terms of their educational profile, all the respondents had graduate degrees with twenty two of them reporting to have completed a post-graduate degree or diploma, mostly in the field of mass communications. The average age of the respondents was thirty-eight years, and the gender divide was skewed in favor of males with male female ratio standing at 21:4. In terms of representation across organizational level hierarchies, the sample consisted of employees belonging to different ranks and designations.

In the sections that follow, I provide selected interview excerpts that have been grouped under broad headings like importance of superior, and the role of situational variables that may affect the trait-state communication relationship (in the subordinate-superior dyad) inside the organizational space. It might be noted that seventeen out of the twenty-five interviewees chose to be interviewed in Hindi Language. Every respondent was free to choose either of the two languages: English or Hindi. Even through the initial transcription was done in the spoken language, Hindi transcripts were later translated into English language.

A brief note on the way interview excerpts are reported in the present study: excerpts are provided within inverted commas and the respondent whose words are being quoted is identified by a numerical number provided in the brackets at the end of the excerpts. For instance, (25) indicates that the preceding excerpt is attributed to respondent number 25. Demographic and other details of interviewees are given in the Appendix 13.2.

4.1. The Importance of Superior
When asked what respondents felt about the importance of supervisory role, one of the respondents identified the role of superior(s) in checking, verifying, and correcting any mistakes that might creep in the news stories “see, supervisory role is very important in this field. The reason being the fact that words are like arrows, once they are out of the bow, you cannot take them back. There is zero tolerance for error in this field; you cannot afford to make a mistake (25)”. This thought was echoed by respondent number 07 who emphasized the role of supervision in improving work quality: “communication
with the immediate superior is very important, without that there would be immense losses... No one in this world is perfect, the story that I am filing may have scope for improvement, when my friends have a look at it they would suggest some changes. Similarly, when the supervisor has a look at it, he too would suggest some changes. If news is filed via mediums, then the write-up would change for better only (07)”.

Some of the respondents also highlighted the role of superior in identifying important news stories; respondent number 10 had this to say: “see, as far as job is concerned, I do discuss with my immediate superiors, because in the morning we have an internal meeting, every morning, so broad guidelines are given by our bosses, so then, when it comes to fine tuning we talk to our immediate superiors and there are other superiors also, who tell us exactly what they want, and we try to deliver (10)”. Respondent number 06 reiterated the same thought; he also underlined the importance of superiors in motivating subordinates: “for a reporter, the immediate superior or the bureau chief is more important than the editor. If the bureau chief is worthy, he can get better news from reporters and direct them to cover important news stories. See, even the most talented reporters would fail to perform if the bureau chief is not worthy. In that case, reporters would lose interest and file stories largely because it is a routine task that must be performed (06)”. Respondents also suggested that the immediate superior is an important link with the top management: “the immediate boss is a very valuable person. He is also valued by the organization. The company also values his feedback. He knows better what we need to do. So, if we tell him about anything then things become simple for us, and we also get better results (02)”. Being an important link with the top management, another respondent suggested that maintaining a good relationship with the superior is not just important for the organization, but also for self: “communication with boss is very important, without that you cannot advance in the organization. You need the help of your superior at all times (08)”.  

4.2. Importance of Subordinate-Superior Communication  
Almost all the respondents were unanimous in upholding the importance of subordinate-superior communication in the field of news media: “one should put one’s thoughts without any fears or concerns; that, in my opinion, is very important. Journalism helps bring out internal thoughts; it helps you connect with the world; so
communication is very important in this field (22)”. Respondent number 08 made a strong point by stating that communication is an integral part of any organization, with subordinate-superior communication being a critical factor: “without communication you cannot work. In whichever organization you work, communication is very important. You are given a task and you do not cooperate with others; you do not talk to your senior about it; well, in that case, you would not be able to work for long, for coordination is a must (08)” The words of another respondent reflected the same thought “not only in X (name of organization), not only in newspaper industry, this is important in all the organizations, unless and until you, unless and until you put up your things before the supervisors, the purpose will not be served (16)” Talking specifically about reporting task, respondent number 02 pointed out that a lot of communication happens between the subordinate-superior dyad: “ninety percent of reporting is done by the reporters to the immediate superior, the bureau chief. If need arises, they also communicate to the resident editor (02)”.

The respondents were also requested to throw light on the nature of upward communication in reporting tasks; the responses confirmed its importance: “we normally report to our chief of bureau, chief of bureau is right now Mr. X (name of person), so, I report to him, and in his absence its deputy chief of bureau, they forward the stories to the editor, editor takes a final call on them (11)” Respondents also emphasized that they preferred direct upward communication as it helped keep matters clear: “when you interact directly with your boss, you can possibly tell in a much better way, what you are doing and what you are not doing. So, I would definitely like that one communicates directly with his boss (22)” Direct communication, as some respondents noted, helped maintain good rapport with the superior: “communication is very important because you work in a field that demands maximum exposure. Thus, it is obvious that your personality, your communication skills are such, that you maintain an excellent rapport with your superior (21)”.

Superiors, in particular, were also requested to share their thoughts on the nature and importance of subordinate-superior communication. Respondent number 03, who occupied a top post, emphasized the importance of proper and timely communication; he was also critical of people who are low on WTC: “there are some people who talk, who work, and who keep the newsroom lively. And that looks good as well. And there are some who work in a very weary and dumb manner. See, this field is of
communication, people must communicate a lot among them. If a reporter does not come forward and inform me that there is an important news story, then how will I communicate that news story to my senior? How will I plan in advance about it and how will I judge its worth? Right at midnight, if the reporter comes and tells me that he has some important news, what will I do at that point of time? One must remain lively; one should talk without any apprehensions (03)”.

4.3. Willingness to Communicate: Trait and State

4.3.1. Willingness to Communicate: The Trait Factor

Most of the respondents viewed WTC as a trait-like characteristic that remained similar across contexts: “so far as I think, behavior is consistent across situations. It is not that one’s behavior would be different when talking in a public place, or that it will be different when one is among family members, or different once with colleagues at the workplace: rather, it will be consistent. Ninety-nine percent of behavior is consistent across situations (02)”. Respondents identified WTC as an inherited trait: “see, in my opinion, it is an inherited trait. There are people, who by their nature are very silent. And there are people who keep on talking like anything. (03)”. The respondents affirmed that even though WTC is trait-like, with time one needs to overpower it: “nature is also there, some, some guys are extroverts, some are introverts, this is inbuilt, this is an inbuilt thing, but in course of time you will have to overpower this (16)”.

Nonetheless, respondents were quick to point out that communication behavior did not reflect knowledge, and that trait-like WTC differences are natural as everyone has their own nature: “People have different nature. Some people talk a lot; some people prefer to talk less. Some talk to the point, some engage in a long talk. Some people can get their work done with a minimal talk: there are people of all sorts...It is said that one should not talk more. But in my opinion, it is not good to set any standards for amount of talking. Because, there are different sorts of people: some of the most knowledgeable ones talk a lot, and there are people who are not very intelligent who also talk a lot; so there is no standard rule (02)”. Another respondent acknowledged that there are different kinds of people, with differing WTC levels, and that they have different work styles: “see, there are different kinds of people in this field, and they work differently: some people prefer to work in silence; some prefer silence along with excitement (20)”.

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Respondent number 22 had an interesting way of affirming and praising low WTC people: “It is said that if you work in silence then your mind is at peace and it works more efficiently. There are people who prefer to work in silence, and there are others who make a lot of noise. So, there are people in this field who are less communicative: they use their mind and rest their lips (22)”. Another respondent, while accepting that WTC is more of a personal disposition, provided an interesting insight: “yes, it is personal dispositions, and you can’t say that this is simply because of this, because, but then, there are instances even in the epic Mahabharata and Ramayana when Sahadeva was one who was considered to be the most knowledgeable, but he won’t speak unless asked for, he was the provider of solutions but he won’t come up on his own, but then you have got to understand the traits, a good boss is one who understands the traits of his team members and employees (15)”.

4.3.2. Willingness to Communicate: The State Factor

An analysis of respondents’ views on linkage between Trait and State WTC suggested a weak but prevalent link. Respondent number 03, a senior member had this to say: “I have seen people, who talk a lot outside, especially in their circle but remain silent in the office. There are such people in this office (03)”. When requested to decode the rationale and reasons behind employees’ communication behavior at the workplace, the respondents came up with a stream of responses. Respondent number 03 suggested that low WTC at the workplace would arise because of problems faced in personal or office life: “it might be the case that they have some internal problems; they may have some personal problems: in their personal life or in office life. That is why they talk less (03)”. Respondent number 10 however told that he preferred to talk less with his superior, as his ideas have often been rebuffed: “at times when I have suggested ideas, most of them have been spiked (10)”.

For respondent number three, low WTC at office had its roots in trait behavior as well as self-indulgence: “One is their trait and another is self-indulgence, they feel that as long as I am working in a good way, it does not really matter what others are doing. If I am working at my best, then my news stories would automatically get their due. (06)”. For respondent number 01, the reason behind low WTC at work lay with high level of apprehension and lack of competencies: “Some talk less with their seniors because they feel that they would get caught... Competence is also an issue, in fact a very important one, especially in Hindi news media. The situation is rather miserable... People also
have apprehensions: they look up to their bosses with a very high regard. They feel that bosses are superior and they themselves are inferior. There is some sort of barrier (01)”. Respondent number 01, a top level employee at a newspaper organization, also articulated that some employees prefer to work within their comfort zone which also affects their desire to communicate on topics that seem foreign to them: “this problem is not specific to the field of media, it is everywhere. People create a comfort zone and prefer to work within its boundaries (01)”. The respondent also pointed three primary reasons behind the apprehensions: “there are three primary reasons behind the apprehensions: hierarchy, incompetence, and ego (01)”. Another respondent however seemed to differ with respondent number 01’s emphasis on incompetence: he suggested that only a few cases of low WTC are caused by incompetence: “incompetency, well that is not the case generally, or may be around five percent (08)”; he further suggested a different stream of reasons behind prevalence of incompetency: “there could be a lot of reasons for that: they might have been selected on the basis of money power, or through some strong reference. Such matters do lead to some sort of incompetence (08)”.

Another respondent, who was requested to identify the reasons of incompetence, cited lack of experience as the primary cause: “As people gain experience, their responsibilities increase, and their apprehension regarding talking to their seniors withers away. But those who are new are somehow apprehensive in communicating with their seniors – they think: if I tell this, what impact will it have? So, they are not able to communicate a lot with their seniors. They are fine communicating with their colleagues and juniors. But with the bureau chief or the chief reporter they are a bit apprehensive (02)”.

Respondent number 02 also identified a linear relationship between competence, confidence and WTC: “If the reporter has incomplete information then he thinks that it is better not to communicate, for the reason that he might be asked about the details of the story. But those reporters who have gathered complete information talk with confidence, they are ready to answer any query and are willing to talk (02)”.

Respondent number 06 identified over-confidence as one of the reasons for lower WTC at workplace: “one reason is that people feel that they are the most knowledgeable of all, that they know everything: so what is the need to talk or to ask anyone for anything (06)”.

Much like 01, respondent number 06 also identified anxiety as a reason behind low WTC at workplace: “another reason is related to anxiety: one feels that the senior
may get displeased and annoyed. The senior may scold that you don’t even know this? You are a journalist or what? (06)”. The idea of anxiety leading to low WTC also found support from respondent number 09 who nonetheless was quick to point out that anxiety or hesitation should not be taken as a reflection of incompetence, thus suggesting lack of interrelationship between competence and apprehension/anxiety/hesitation: “low willingness to talk or some sort of hesitation should not be taken as a reflection of any form of incompetency (09)”. He further stressed the temporal nature of hesitation: “hesitation goes away with time. In the beginning people are a little hesitant, but with time that hesitation goes away. (09)” Another respondent was of the view that it all depended on a mix of personal and situational concerns: “your willingness to talk depends upon your mood, your persona, your personality, the kind of person you are, your belief, your ideologies, your thoughts about the particular news story and how you look at news in general. So, it all depends (20)”. Respondents also identified many situational factors unique to the organization as reasons behind low WTC at the workplace. These factors are discussed in detail in the following sections and will be given a miss here.

4.3.3. WTC-State: Importance and Effects

4.3.3.1. Importance of High WTC

Most of the respondents had the impression that High WTC is beneficial, more so, because the nature of the job demanded people to be highly willing to talk: “interpersonal communication is very important. In this field, you cannot move a single step without communication, so communication is very important (08)”. The respondents underlined the importance of communication in getting better stories: “reporting is all about interacting with people, the more you interact, the better stories you can get. (11)”. Respondent number 16 noted that people across media organizations are generally high on WTC: “media organizations, I tell you, you know, particularly among the reporters, by and large you will find extroverts (16)”.

Majority of the respondents stressed that high WTC was beneficial: the reason – once in the field, reporters may have to communicate with anyone, a situation where communication could be used as an effective tool: “that is the most important tool, in fact, for any journalist to excel, is how you communicate with people, because this is one field where you never know with whom you have to interact (14)”. Importance of
high WTC in getting information from the field was also emphasized by respondent number 19 who underlined the importance of the art of talking: “in media you cannot afford to be an introvert; you should be blessed with the art of talking. Once you are in this field, you should be able to guess what would make your interviewee happy and what would upset him (19)”. Another respondent, while referring to news anchors, stressed that some people just can’t afford to be low WTC: “those who come on screen just cannot afford to be introverts (25)”

One of the respondents identified talking as the real strength of reporters; he even put forward his belief that people who talk a lot are never the bad guys: “if you talk more you will get more and more stories... That is why, wherever you are, talk, give time, this is a rule. You should talk; this is our main strength. The more you talk, the more you stand gained. As in the case of reading, the more you read, the more your language gets refined, in the same way, the more one talks, the better it is... If you do not talk, the scope of improvement will diminish. If you keep up to yourself and do not talk, you will not gain anything; rather you stand to lose... In my opinion, the more you talk, the faster your work will get done; people will also listen to you. A person who talks a lot is never a bad guy (07)”.

4.3.3.2. **Effect of Low WTC**

Most of the respondents, while praising high WTC were also critical of low WTC: “too unwilling to talk, that is also a bad sign, because you must be able to talk at the right time... you cannot be shy, you cannot try to be introvert all the time, if you have a valid question, you must put it to the authorities concerned, and try to get the answer, whatever answer is there (14)”. When requested to share their understanding of possible effects of low WTC, some of the respondents highlighted the inability of low WTC people to display their talent: “The world has become very showy in nature. If you work, you need to show that you work; if you have talent, you need to show it. And you must communicate to others about your competence and abilities. You must talk and sell yourself. By being silent, no one but you would suffer (22)”.

Respondent number 15 emphasized the non-political nature of low WTC people, pressing home his argument that organizations often treat low WTC in such a way that their professional growth is hindered: “these people don’t try to show anything which will offend, further offend things, but they, they tend to withdraw in their selves, then,
then the people around can say why would you care about these miniscule number of people who have gone, withdrawn in their selves, because these people are in minority; but an efficient organization takes care of all of its people and tries to bring the best out of them. (15)” One of the respondent even admitted that he was getting professionally hurt because of his low WTC: “I must be getting affected, percentage-wise I won’t know, to some extent yes, it must be affecting; I realize that. (10)”.

Notwithstanding, some respondents did not find any problem with people being low on WTC; they cited the case of ‘desk’ jobs wherein people are appraised mainly for their writing skills: “there is no harm in it as such, if you are not willing to talk. In fact, their profession doesn’t require them to talk much, they are required to write, if they are in visual media, their job is to tell people that look this has happened (12)”.

Some of the respondents, while acknowledging that there were a lot of low WTC people in news media, told that such people prefer to work on the desk where interpersonal communication requirements are much lower as compared to reporting tasks: “there are some people who are introverts, they do not prefer to work in the field. They love to read and engage themselves in research based tasks. For such people, across all media organizations, there are research departments. They do research and help identify potential news stories. There is no need for them to go to the field, they communicate about what they perceive could become news stories – this way, they do reporting through the backstage (24)”. Respondents were of the view that being low in WTC did not affect one’s efficiency as people could choose the job as per their communicative abilities: “see, there are a lot of roles, scripting is an important part of this field. And there you can work very efficiently without being an extrovert. These people come up with very good scripts, and most of the times they seem to work in a very silent manner (25)”.

Nonetheless, the respondents were also quick to point out that even if there were people who are low on WTC, the requirements of the field would push them towards the high WTC side: “the profession of media is such that even the introverts turn to extroverts with time. You face situations that force you to act like an extrovert (17)”.

One of the respondents shared how news media organizations offer a platform where low WTC people are encouraged to open-up: “Some of them get automatically trained, and some of them we train, suppose we have got our meeting there; everyday, at twelve o’clock, we encourage youngsters to come up with the facts, we ask them what reports you are
going to carry, to file today, he has to speak, so he wants to file this report, then why do you want to file this report, then he will have to elaborate, so naturally his communication skills will be developed, we encourage, encourage them to come up with the facts (16)”.

4.3.3.3. The Nature of Low WTC

Contrary to what most people said regarding the importance of high WTC, there were some who took a very different approach: for respondent number 11, it was perfectly okay to be on the lower side of WTC: “I think this is more of a, it’s more related to their nature. I don’t say that people who don’t talk are introverts but there are people who would like to keep to themselves and stick to the work that they are doing, and, why should they? I absolutely believe why should they make loud noise? (11)”. One of the respondents, while discarding the importance of high WTC, accentuated the thought that low WTC people are more dedicated to their work: “there are people who are quiet and dedicated. Too much talking is not good in the field of journalism: be dedicated to your work and talk less. There should not be any communication gap. There is no need to talk a lot, just communicate to your chief reporter about the news stories and how you are going to cover them: there is no need to engage yourself in excessive talk (09)”.

He further argued that rather than being high on WTC, people should be high on listening abilities: “do not give advice, rater listen. One should listen: then only you would be able to learn. If you tell more and listen less, you will never be able to learn” (09).

Toeing on a similar path, respondent number 15 identified low WTC people as ones who have very high organizational identification: “and mind you, these are the people who mean a lot, who mean a lot in the sense that they want to keep the flag of their organizations flying high so they would be recognized in the society; because they are not flamboyant, they are not able to cut along well with everybody. They want that the name of my organization should be such that when I present, that I am from such and such organization, I am given an instant welcome, I am given the best of that treatment, and access to the information I am trying to get (15)”.

4.3.3.4. Judicious Mix of High and Low WTC

Some of the respondents had the belief that communication efficiency was more important than WTC: “It does not matter whether you talk more or less. What matters
is your efficiency... there are people who talk less but are highly efficient, and there are people who talk a lot but are not that efficient (18)”. These respondents were of the view that people need to change their communication behavior as per the context: respondent number 17 exemplified through a simple case of interviewing an introvert person: “well, it is the case that some people are introverts – getting information from them is a real tough job. In such cases, it becomes important that you are open and that you make your guest comfortable. Subsequently, your guest would unwind and start talking; it is important then that you shape your communication style as per the occasion... a media person, one who is an interviewer, should have flexibility... you should be able to perceive if the interviewee is an extrovert; if he is an extrovert then you may like to talk more, and if he is an introvert then you first need to make him comfortable (17)”. The respondents further suggested that as context determines one’s willingness to communicate, it indirectly governs state-like WTC behavior: “no see, at a different level that is there, I can make, or I can communicate or I can mingle, but at certain other levels, some contexts are there, you can say, there are some blockages, you know, which hinder me (10)”.

4.4. Beyond WTC

4.4.1. Communication Skills

Apart from WTC, respondents identified communication skills as a crucial element of success in media: “I mean, communication skills, I mean, it is very much on demand in journalism, without this you cannot move any further (16)”; a thought reciprocated by another respondent: “well, in my opinion, communication skills are very important if you really want to succeed in this field. (23)” Respondents belonging to broadcast media voiced similar opinions: “your communication should be powerful enough so that viewers appreciate you; they should easily comprehend what you intend to convey. As long as you do not have good communication skills, success is a distant dream (19)”. One of the respondents also drew attention to the worth of communication skills in daily activities at the workplace: “higher levels of communication skills are very important, and more important for communication among colleagues and with the supervisor. Because, this is your medium of expression: if you are unable to express yourself, if you are unable to say what you are thinking, then everything stops there itself (25)”.
Nonetheless, respondents seemed to have a very generic idea of the meaning of the term ‘communication skills’; some of them stated that communication skills needed to be supplanted with other skills such as: Creativity: “they have to be very creative are far as communicative skills are concerned, because you can’t communicate with a slum dweller in Anglicized accent, then you have to talk to him in the local parlance, so that is why it is very important (14)”; and, Clarity of Thought: “If you are communicating with your boss, also like in my case, my chief of bureau, you got to have clarity in thought, you should understand what he is trying to tell you, what you are trying to say, because you see, it can’t be a monologue; because most of the times what we do here is that we have meetings from twelve to one, so that’s quite a lively discussion with our editor, the editor presiding the sessions, he gives us stories and we interact, so it’s never a kind of one sided one way traffic that it’s only the editor who is talking, see you got to have good communication skills so as to put your point across (11)”.

While most respondents who talked about communication skills did highlight its importance, some of them pointed out that competence scored over communication skills: “you got to actually have very good communication skills to communicate with your subordinates, or for that matter even interact with people outside, outside the organization, but then of course, it is desirable but not the most desirable factor, because in print I think it is finally what you write that matters (11)”. Treading on a mid-path, respondent number 26 identified both communication skills and competence to be equally important: “this is not just about interpersonal skills or communication. When we file a story, apart from better communication skills, the language of the stories should also meet the established standards. Thus, it is important that you are able to say what you want to say in an efficient way (25)”. Another respondent drew attention to the importance of experience in development of communication skills: “I mean, somebody who has joined the profession today, I mean they may be lacking on this count, but in the course of time, you will find him very much communicative and fluent (16)”. Respondent number 02 further emphasized the importance of exposure and responsibilities in developing one’s communication skills: “With better exposure and increasing responsibilities, people tend to refine their communication skills. If one has to meet only ten people on a daily basis then it is but obvious that his communication skills would be weak; communication skills get better with experience (02)”.

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4.4.2. Interpersonal Skills and Writing Skills

Treading on a slightly different line, one of the respondents emphasized that as media persons need to relate to people in an effective manner; interpersonal skills are more important compared to communication skills: “you need to develop interpersonal skills; many people are not good at that (18)”. He further specified the differences between interpersonal and communication skills: “communication skills is entirely different thing and interpersonal relation is entirely different, communication skills depends on the language, you can communicate in any language, and interpersonal relations is purely a humane approach, human behavior, understanding people ... communication skills is like, if you are good in language you can communicate well, interpersonal relations all depend on your personality, inherent qualities (18)”.

One of the respondents drew attention to the nature of reporting tasks, underlining the importance of writing skills in addition to communication skills: “very necessary because we keep on meeting unknown people all the time, so until and unless you are able to talk to them, on their subject, or you are able to understand what they are telling you, so you won’t be able to come up with a story, or work on a report, so, that way communication skills are very necessary for reporters (12)”. This respondent further emphasized the importance of writing skills in journalism: “it is one of the most important things in journalism. Your communication skills, your writing skills, the way you put your facts, it should be interesting, and at the same time the readers should enjoy reading your report (12)”.

4.4.3. Other Skills

Respondents were found willing to share the importance of other factors important to the field. One of the respondents, while praising high WTC, quickly pointed out the need for better observational qualities: “yes that does help at times, but then the bigger need is to be observant, you have to be a keen observer, and you must know when to speak and what to speak (14)”. He further punctuated the importance of innovation and experimenting: “if you have a question, you must ask, sometimes out of box thinking also helps, people may laugh off, but then you may get a very good story out of that, so journalism is all about innovativeness, experimenting (14)”. Another respondent, while referring to introverts, identified persuasive power as an important talent: “you cannot afford to be introvert: you have to meet deadlines, file the stories. Moreover, you need to get information from people, so you also need to be persuasive so that people share
information with you (17)". The importance of persuasive skills was also emphasized by respondent number 24 who detailed its nature: “when we go in the field, there we have to make people understand why we are covering a particular news story; what is its importance, and what will be its effect. Then the person with whom we are talking would take us seriously. Then only they would entertain us (24)”. This respondent further identified the ability to persuasively communicate thoughts as a crucial talent: “In my opinion, this is a very important ability that a reporter must have, that he is able to communicate himself to others, and that the other person, to whom he is talking, takes his words with seriousness. This capability should be there in reporters. (24)”. Another respondent, who belonged to the field of broadcast journalism, identified some more skills, though specific to news anchoring: “the news anchors should have screen presence and presentability. They have to be witty, and should show spontaneity (25)”. Some respondents showed a more conventional outlook to role of skills, with one respondent suggesting that in the end, it is ultimately the stories that you cover that matter: “In a media organization everything is black and white, so if you have the merit, if you have the worth, your bylines, your stories, will speak for you; if you are not good enough, only then you would like to communicate personally with somebody up the order, otherwise, if you are good enough, your own work will speak for you (14)”. Similar conventional concerns were raised by another respondent, who argued that until and unless one possesses deep knowledge of the field, all other skills would remain unutilized: “another important thing is this that they should have deep knowledge of their subject, their field. They can quickly answer and engage others in conversation only when they have complete command over the topic of discussion. It is expected of journalists that they should know something about everything and everything about something, you know, specialization. So this is important that they have complete knowledge of their subject, then only can they talk; it is the same case with the news anchors (25)”. A respondent however suggested that while competence was indeed critical, there were short-cuts to success: “and then in a human society, everybody wants praise, everybody loves sycophancy: that is not out of the world, it is quite natural. So, if somebody does excel that way, may god bless him, everybody has his own way (14)".
4.5. On the Role of Organizational Variables

4.5.1. Fair Treatment from the Superior

Respondents shared their understanding of how sense of injustice, wherein the source of injustice was the superior, could affect subordinate’s willingness to communicate: “yes, definitely, it happens, it happens most of the times, when you see that when the meeting or the discussions are about to begin, and a set of people arriving at the office, having tea or interactions with their bosses, and the whole agenda is set; and then it is only a matter of information that is being passed, rather than a healthy open discussion (15)”.

Some of the respondents identified superiors as the source of rude behavior, indicating that the way superiors handle the employees affects their communication behavior at workplace: “earlier I worked at X (name of organization), there, one or two boys used to tell me that their boss used to talk in a very rude way, that they felt like taking a half-day or an off-day. They used to work in silence, in stress; as a result, they would ultimately leave the organization. But in the end, it is the organization that suffers (03)”.

Respondent number 03, a senior official, shared his ideas on why bosses sometimes behave rudely and why they ought to maintain a balance between being hard and soft: “sometimes a boss may need to show his anger; it may be the need of the hour. Sometimes, when a junior makes a mistake then the boss should express his displeasure. It is a company: you need to be hard sometimes and soft the next moment (03)”.

However, the same respondent emphatically stressed that showing one’s displeasure should not translate into humiliating others in public, as it would only aggravate the situation and further dissociate the subordinate from the superior: “sometimes if the senior shouts at his junior in front of others, humiliates him publicly, then that person would start disassociating with the boss... One should not humiliate publicly, if you want to punish, punish, but one should not hurt others’ self-respect, else even a trivial issue would get out of control (03)”.

The ideas of the top official got reflected in another respondent’s words, who was of the opinion that such superiors, who do not treat their subordinates with a sense of dignity should be fired: “one should not talk in such a manner: hey, what kind of work do you do? Is this reporting? Do you know what is happening in your field? So, people should not come down on their juniors in this manner... And if there are people who do this, then they should be thrown out of the organization (07)”.
4.5.2. Better Relationship with the Superior

In the early part of this section, the importance of the superior was emphasized. As almost all respondents suggested subordinate-superior relationship to be highly important, they were requested to share the reasons behind the importance of this dyadic relationship: “relationship with boss is very important, not just in media, but everywhere. This is also a part of personality, because you are doing a good job, but your work does not catch the attention of your boss. He will notice after a long period of time, but if you have a good rapport with your boss, then you can show him your quality work right from day one. In other case, your quality work catches his attention on hundredth day – there is a difference between the two (21)”.

As evident, the reason behind getting into the good books of the superior seemed to have some professional concerns: “in every profession, you need a senior, a mentor to succeed (03)”; the respondents stressed emphatically that better subordinate-superior relationship leads to better productivity and performance, more so in the field of news media: “this is very important in the field of news media. The more comfortable you are with your superior, the better your relationship with him, the better would be your performance (17)”.

The respondents saw the superior as a powerful person and as a representative of the organization: “supervisor should work in a fair manner. His vision should be clear: if he has dubious intentions, then the organization too would not be fair (03)”. As the supervisor was seen as a powerful person, the subordinates also shared their views on the issue of responsibility: to many, the superior needed to act like a role model: “the leader should lead from the front. He should become a model for others. If he works in a fair manner, then we too would try our best (03)”. Some respondents expressed their concerns regarding promotion and the role that the superior plays: “the one who is my senior, if he observes that I have talent, that I work well, then he should promote me. In general this happens; at least this is how it works in my organization (03)”.

Having a cooperative relationship with the superior also drew respondents’ attention; the respondents expressed that a working subordinate-superior relationship was a must: “if your immediate boss does not cooperate with you, and you do not cooperate with your boss, then it would neither be beneficial for you, nor for your organization. Because then, the superior would demoralize you, he would create problems for you at every step (05)”. The respondents argued in favor of establishing a harmonious
relationship with one’s superiors: “yes, it is important that you have harmonious relationship with your seniors, and especially, with the chief of bureau (11)”. On a different note, one of the respondents suggested that while relationships are short-lived, it is one’s individual talent that ultimately matters: “the personal level relationships with your superior do not last for long. If your work is superior, then your work speaks out for you, your work is long lasting (20)”.

When requested to share their views on how a harmonious relationship with the superiors could affect communication behavior of the subordinates, respondents suggested that supportive superiors act as per individual’s needs: “you have got to understand the traits; a good boss is one who understands the traits of his team members and employees (15)”. Another respondent suggested that a good superior does not make up her/his mind just on the basis of someone’s communication behavior; rather, a good superior understands the unique talent of people who are otherwise low on WTC: “see, it all depends on the boss, if the boss knows that no, this fellow doesn’t speak much, but then he is a good hand, that he is a competent hand (12)”.

Respondent number 02 identified a direct link between subordinate-superior relationship and WTC: “the interpersonal relationship with my supervisor can affect my willingness to communicate with him (02)”.

4.5.3. A Powerful, Worthy, and non-bullying Superior

The preceding discussion (on the reasons behind maintaining a harmonious relationship with the superior) suggested that subordinates prefer to have a better relationship with the superior as they see her/him as powerful person who not only has crucial expertise needed for the job, but is also a critical link with the top management.

On the role of superiors as experts, a respondent opined: “the superior should have an understanding of the stories. In the meeting he should have the ability to guide the reporters about the stories; he should suggest a few points on how the stories could be better covered. Once the reporter comes with the stories, he should identify the weak areas, the omissions, and suggest improvements (06)”. Such thoughts were reflected in another respondent’s words who expressed: “the supervisor has a very important role to play. He helps identify grammatical and factual errors. He also helps identify analytical errors that might have crept in during the conceptual stage, in their interpretation, in understanding the true meaning of stories, and in comprehending
their eventual social effect. Therefore, supervision should be there, so that a story is thoroughly checked before it moves to the final stages (25)

Some of the respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining harmonious relationship with the superior in order to reap benefits: “yes it is important that you have harmonious relationship with your seniors and especially your chief of bureau, because after all you are reporting to him, and he gives you stories, ideas, you got to execute them, and for us, he is the person who reads our copies before forwarding them to the editor (11)”. Another respondent underlined the importance of maintaining a comfort level so that superiors’ expertise could be utilized in a fruitful manner: “of course, very much, if you are at comfort level with seniors, supervisors, and your bosses, working becomes easier, because you keep on getting guidance. Suppose I am new here and I don’t have many contacts, if I need some contact, if I need a clue that whom to talk to, who to approach, about this information, so the seniors, if you are at good terms with them, then they will certainly help you out (12)”.

One of the respondents shared his views on the bullying power of the superiors: in his opinion, if a superior was bullying in nature, then her/his subordinates would prefer to keep to themselves; this would ultimately lower subordinates’ state-like WTC: “there are a few bosses who tell us that we must not raise our heads while talking to them, that when they talk, we should just listen. But media is such a field that eighty percent bosses encourage their juniors to speak. Bossing does not go on well in the field of media. If we also treat our juniors in the same way; if we also tell the reporters that they must not speak up, then the reporters would remain silent even when they are out on the field (19)”. This respondent further expressed his views on the uneven distribution of power in the subordinate-superior dyad: “your annual progress reports are compiled by your boss. If you do not have good relationship with him, then you would face hardships. You are working in a private system; you must remember one thing, that the boss is always right (19)”.

Another respondent shared his views regarding coercive power of superiors: “if the supervisor wishes, he can create problems for you at every step. He can stop your stories (05)”. Respondent number 03, while discussing the coercive power of superiors emphasized that people are unwilling to communicate if they fear their superior; he further stressed that exercise of such powers has an overall negative effect: “it might be
possible that he fears his boss. It might be possible that his supervisor is not a good person… See, in any organization, if the employee fears his boss, fears coming to the office, then it would not be good for the organization (03)“.

4.5.4. Politically Charged Atmosphere

Respondents were also requested to share their view on politics in organizations. Almost all of them accepted that it was a critical factor: “yes, politics is a big factor here (08)”. Some respondents, while discounting the presence of politics in the current organization, stated that they had faced politicking behavior while they worked for other media houses: “X (name of the current organization) is a very fair organization; here reporters are neither silenced nor repressed. Here there is no politics… but I have friends in other media organizations, especially those working in Hindi language states, and they tell me that they face a lot of internal politics there, and that a lot of time is lost in politicking activities (06)”. Nonetheless, as respondents talked mainly about negative politicking activities, they unanimously condemned its presence, questioning its importance: “politics should not be there; what is its use? (05)”. They however did affirm that politics and prejudicial behavior could be found across all the organizations: “there, in a sense, yes, but it is not one-off instance, you can find it happening at almost all levels, in almost all, even non-significant organizations, because we are people, as a group we pretend to form affinity with certain people and we carry a lot of prejudices, these things tend to happen (15)”. When questioned about the reason behind the widespread presence of politics, the respondents stressed that politics is often used as a ploy to career enhancement by a select group of people: “it is simply career, a ploy to career enhancement, insecurity, and the urge to be on the right side of the boss, of the management, to be comfortable. Once you try to cross or express your views, you might not be welcome, and then you would have to face certain hardships (15)”.

Respondents also shared their views on how politics could affect one’s willingness to communicate at the workplace: “if he is engaging himself in politics, then he may remain silent here but would gossip a lot outside the workplace, at the tea shop, near the crossing. This is everywhere, this is the story of every organization; this is human nature. … If we do not give our hundred percent, if we do not enjoy our work, then quality of our work would get affected, ultimately productivity would suffer (03)” When respondents were requested to share their views on how political climate of the
organization could have any effect on an individual’s WTC level, they identified the role of selective communication within groups: “I am not speaking entirely about my organization, highest media; there are groups, sub-groups, which keep on devising and communicating among themselves, and creating walls for others to be part of it, as if there is some apple to be taken (15)”. Respondents also emphasized that high political climate would lead to low state-like WTC: “if the environment is such that there is too much of politics, then yes, an employee might keep to himself; he would not be very forthcoming to talk (11)”. 

4.5.5. Supportive and Open Climate

Talking about general elements of a healthy environment, respondents pointed the importance of freedom of expression: “there should be freedom of expression for everyone: it is a must (02)” . Respondent number 16, while praising his organization, was critical of other organizations for putting a cap on expression: “this is workers-friendly organization, first thing; second... you need independence, that should be on the priority list, and in X (name of the organization), this is on the top of the agenda, I have heard that at many other news media organizations, your opinions are compromised, you are not that independent to speak or to write, but that is completely missing in X (name of the organization) (16)” . Many other elements, of what contributed to a healthy working environment, were also identified by the respondents: “in a good media organization, the working environment should be excellent, it should be clean. People should not indulge in leg pulling, or make stories, or keep on complaining about others. These things should not be there (23)” . In general, a vast majority of respondents underlined the importance of two major elements: openness and teamwork, i.e. cooperation and coordination.

While talking about openness in communication, respondent number 09 gave a very detailed response: “for a good organization, first you need to have good reporters; there should be interaction among people, people should discuss how things could be improved. Next, the boss should be cooperative. He should know the unique talent of each reporter: their abilities and their areas of strength. And there should be openness in communication. When people communicate in an open way, things stand to improve (09)”. Another respondent stressed the importance of openness and participation; he further emphasized the role of the superior in establishing a zone of comfort where ideas could be shared easily even by those who were a bit apprehensive about
communicating, i.e. low WTC employees: “definitely it is the first trait of humans, to communicate with whom you feel comfortable, therefore the first thing that the boss should do is to disarm, he should make you feel invited, he should make you feel that you would be heard, he should encourage you to think, he should invite ideas and that should be a coconstantaneous process... he should make everybody feel welcomed, wanted, and once the walls and the apprehension are gone, you will find even the reticent of the team members trying to contribute, trying to take the extra mile for the benefit of the organization (15)”. Respondent number 02 was even more specific: “the supervisor should be open to his juniors, only when he is open to their ideas that the juniors would like to communicate with him. Openness is a must (02)”, he further emphasized that while openness from superior was indeed a must for proper communication, a similar approach must be reflected by the subordinates: “openness should be from both sides: from the side of the supervisor and from subordinate’s side as well (02)”. One of the respondents pointed out that if people work in an environment where their thoughts are not valued then they would prefer not to communicate: “people do not listen to your thoughts, they do not value your thoughts; this is also a big factor behind unwillingness to communicate (08)”.

Respondents emphasized the importance of coordination and advocated mutual respect: “The most important thing is co-ordination... there should be a feeling of mutual respect (08)”. One of the respondents argued that there is paucity of time in the field of journalism, therefore, cordial relations needed to be maintained for proper interaction: “if there is too much pressure, you would have less time to think, to talk, you will always be short of time. A good organization is one where apart from your work, you are made to feel that your colleague, your boss, each one of them is your family member; there is proper interaction among them (21)”. Referring to the nature of the tasks, another respondent emphasized the importance of cooperation and teamwork: “if there is transparency, open mindedness, a feeling of cooperation, then the general climate would be very good, because this field demands team work. Here an individual would not be able to complete even a single task without the help of others (05)”. Respondent number 07 sounded a bit concerned: he stressed that the notion of teamwork, even though widely valued, had few takers: “in my opinion the most important thing is the climate: that should be good. And for good climate, there should be good people. For instance, in our field, people do not generally support one another. The importance of
team work is trumpeted. Its value is highlighted; the way we read in books. But in reality no one engages in team work: that just does not happen (07)”. Notwithstanding, almost all the respondents identified teamwork as an important ingredient of the news media field: “you have to act in team; team means it consists of all the reporters, all the desk people, you have to interact with the people, otherwise the whole purpose is defeated (16)”.

Team work, as the respondents pointed out, is necessary for any organization without which an organization would get crippled: “the first thing is that if you want to take your organization to the top, you will have to work in a team: this is the first thing; otherwise you can’t function (16)”. One respondent pointed out that without proper communication and teamwork, every media person would just be a secluded island: “that is what I am saying, communication should be there, because we work in a team. I mean, I can’t act here as an island, as an independent entity I can’t function (16)”. Referring to the way reporting tasks are completed, another respondent stressed that a reporter cannot function as a single unit: ultimately what matters is the team: “one reporter cannot do anything, it is all about team work; everyone contributes as a team member (09)”.

4.6. Other Variables: Caste and Social Background

Respondents also identified some other issues that could affect communication behavior of subordinates. One of the respondents stressed that similarity of castes could lead to higher WTC among the subordinate-superior dyad: “caste is a big issue in journalism. Caste factor plays a major role across all media houses in Bihar (08)”. For respondent number 08, subordinate’s family, school, and education background could play a major role in dictating communication behavior at the workplace: “There are so many factors that play upon each other, it all depends on your family background; it all depends on the education you have received, so many things. If you are less communicative, might be, you did not learn this art from your family members, you did not learn it from the society, from the school; normally you will find the students from public schools, they are very well versed, they are outspoken, plus they have been taught in the schools, some of them are also taught in their family as well, so they inherited it from their family (16)”.

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4.7. On Stress: Causes and Effects

Talking about stress, respondents indicated that as high communication is expected of employees in the media field, those who prefer to communicate less could feel stressed: “stress level yes, because that is a demand: your organization wants you to communicate; that’s the demand of the job. So if you are not actually doing what is expected of you, then obviously it is going to increase your stress level, because you are not fulfilling the demand that is expected of you (11)”. Respondents were also of the view that those who have low WTC may feel a bit frustrated because of non-recognition of their talent: “those people who remain silent, well, they might be frustrated, not stressed, as their talent is never recognized because of their silence (23)

The respondents were requested to share reasons that they felt could lead to stress; one of them stressed that stress arises primarily because of failure to adapt, because people often fail to work as per the conditions and the resources available: “there are people, who work as per their own style, and there are others who adapt to the needs of the system, they are also called the best minds. If you work as per the requirement of the prevalent system, utilizing the resources that are available to you, then it is fine. Else you may have to leave the organization, you will work under stress (05)”. This respondent further stressed the importance of making adjustments to one’s working style: “you have to adjust. You should also try to adjust, isn’t it? You should work as per the rules and the policies (05)

Respondents shared the view that stress was not unique to any particular media organization, and that the situation was similar across all media organizations: “the situation is same across media organizations, work hours are almost the same (08)”. Respondents were also of the view that stress and passion were the defining characteristic of media field: “stress is very high in this field, so is passion (20)”. To many, stress came as usual: “our job is such, that you always feel the pressure: we have become habitual of facing stress. We try to shield ourselves from tension. Still, because of the work pressure, stress does strike us occasionally (08)”; it had become part of daily life: “stress has become a schedule: it has become a schedule of life. Everyone knows that you cannot do anything about it; you have to live with it (04)”. As stress came as usual to some respondents, they had a ‘simpler’ way of tackling it: changing the lifestyle: “with ten years of experience, my body has become habitual to this way of
life; it has adopted itself. Earlier I used to face a lot of problems: working for thirteen, fourteen hours, out of home for the longer period of time, sleeping just for four or six hours. But with time, I became habituated, so it no longer affects in the same way (21)“.

4.8 Stress: Felt at Psychological and Physiological Level

Discussing causes of stress, some respondents noted the negative effect of age on one’s ability to take-in stress: “at twenty years of age, your career is most important, but once you reach thirty plus, you start thinking about career and your family. And this field is such that you have to work a lot, you have to work under stress. At twenty, you enjoy, but at thirty you come to realize that your family life, your private life, is getting affected (21)”. Another respondent however suggested a more psychological reason: “once you think that you are always up against the wall, the stress level is bound to increase, and, not all of us are blessed with the sense, or the techniques to manage this, and in the end, it is not the employee who only suffers, it is the organization which has to pay the price of not getting the best out of you (15)”.

The psychological effect of stress, as the respondents noted, was felt most seriously in terms of dwindling work-life balance: “total dedication, twenty-four hours dedication, this is at the cost of your family (16)”. As per respondent number 21, the non-routine and long hours of work had serious effects on one’s family life: “but yes, my family members do feel that why my routine is not like others; why is Sunday not a holiday for me; why do I not spend time with them – so these problems are there (21)”.

Respondents also indicated that office stress contributed to a rise in blood pressure: “yes, everything, everything, his whole personality. I have seen people going down the drain, taking medications, blood, there are instances of people with rising blood pressures, and so on and so forth (15)”. Another respondent suggested that stress related health problems could have its origins in the way work is structured; he drew attention to the lack of proper sleeping hours in reporting tasks: “just four days back, the results of the engineering and intermediate examinations were out. I went to report the story. I am also responsible for the technical side, so I finished other tasks before I moved to cover the story. I could not sleep for the whole night. I wanted to have a look at other competing newspapers, to see if they had covered any part of the story that could have missed my attention... in the morning I scanned through the newspapers, there was nothing that I missed. Then I went back to home and slept with peace (07)”.

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Another respondent, who was of the view that stress arose because of multiple dependencies on which one does not have full command, shared how he tackled psychological stress: ironically, his way of tackling stress might only help transform psychological to physiological stress: “Suddenly some technical errors, some glitches in the OB, you cannot do anything; machines can fail at any time. But you are working under pressure, you had to cover an exclusive news story, it was assigned to you. Other news channels have now covered the story; well, you are under stress now, extreme stress. What will you do? Well, I just sip a cup of tea with a stick of cigarette; that relieves my stress (20)”.  

4.9. Outcome of the Interview Process

The semi-structured interviews with a sample that is representative of the target population gave credence to the understanding that in an organizational context, there could be some situations that can interact with an employee’s trait-like communication behavior to elicit state-like communication behavior.

Moreover, some interviewers also suggested that the state-like communication with the immediate superior takes multiple forms. For instance, respondent number 21 suggested that communication with superior often involves talks that are not specific to job concerns: “if there is too much pressure, you would have less time to think, to talk, you will always be short of time. A good organization is one where apart from your work, you are made to feel that your colleague, your boss, each one of them is your family member; there is proper interaction among them (21)” The respondent suggested that communication within the organization, especially with the superior, should not only be restricted to task related concerns, but should arise out of a natural process: organizational members should be tied to one another as if they are members of a family, where people have no hesitations, and where people are free to criticize, and are open to criticisms. Such thoughts however suggested that the dependent variable, i.e. state-like communication might needed to be broken down into two forms: that of work-related and non-work-related concerns – a thought to which I cater to in detail, in Phase II of the present study.