

## Impact of Communication Skills on Academic Productivity Among Civil Engineering Students at a Philippine University: A Qualitative Analysis

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### Abstract

*This research, which is qualitative in nature, examines the impact of communication skills on the academic productivity of students majoring in civil engineering at a Philippine university. The goal of this research is to ascertain if students' academic productivity is impacted by their communication skills. To collect the required data, a structured interview questionnaire was created and distributed using Google Forms. In all, eight informants participated in this investigation. The findings have shown the critical significance that communication skills have in students' overall academic productivity. Accordingly, it can be said that communication skills have an impact on both academic productivity and the relationships that students have with their peers both inside and outside of the classroom. Students' desire to speak successfully is positively correlated with their communication skills. According to the findings, informal chat was the most popular method of communication among students studying civil engineering. We also looked at the difficulties they faced and how they overcame them. The research also looked at how these students communicate with each other while working in groups on academic assignments like group projects and how they resolve disagreements about timetables. In summary, this research offers insights into the ways in which students majoring in Civil Engineering at a Philippine university interact with one other despite possible disputes and how such interaction affects their academic productivity.*

**Keywords:** Academic Productivity, Civil Engineering, and Communication Skills.

### Introduction

According to Jasim and Khalifa (2019), students' communication skills are seen as a crucial element of their academic achievement and as being essential to their success in the classroom. According to Cho et al. (2007), as cited in Palos & Petrovici (2014), students who are more willing to communicate speak up more in class, participate in projects that require communication more frequently, and feel much more at ease taking the lead and developing relationships with others. Being comfortable with communication is a huge advantage in learning. Students who are reticent or less inclined to engage with others are, on the other hand, usually those who are less eager to speak.

An educator's involvement in communication is also essential to a student's academic achievement;

the student-teacher connection determines whether the student succeeds or fails. Hidayat (2014), referenced in Sukardi (2017), states that since teachers' teaching practices do not promote critical thinking and active participation in the learning process, students are unwilling to share their problems and instead choose to leave them unanswered. Both instructors and students have the same educational objectives, and in order to achieve these objectives, one is reliant on the other. According to Palos and Petrovici (2014), pupils who communicate with their instructor more effectively in the classroom learn more and perform better.

Effective communication is a skill that civil engineering students need to practise since it is essential to accomplishing their assignments. As to Saleh et al. (2019), it is essential to harmonise the curriculum development of Civil Engineering with industry expectations by evaluating the extent to which engineering graduates consider themselves to be equipped with Communication Skills for the workforce. Because communication is key to cooperation and ultimately affects a project's success on the construction site, having strong communication skills is necessary for an engineering career (Masduki & Zakaria, 2020).

One of the most crucial elements in achieving academic productivity is students' capacity for effective communication. But there is a claim that communication skills are often overlooked in favour of technical abilities, particularly in professions like civil engineering. This claim has sparked intense debate among issue experts.

Effective communication is crucial for raising students' academic productivity, claim Shinde & Chikhalikar (2016). According to their research, professional courses in science, engineering, and medicine in developing nations often overlook Communication Skills, emphasising instead the material itself rather than its delivery. Because of their poor interpersonal skills, students with strong technical knowledge find it challenging to communicate with others in groups or during interviews. Good connections may be cultivated via efficient communication skills, as shown by Mahmud's (2014) research. Speech and language impairments not only make studying more difficult, but they also have an effect on social abilities like friendship and self-assurance developing. Students who possess strong communication skills and a high degree of self-confidence may be inspired to work more and do better academically. According to Palos & Petrovici (2014), students who are more open to communicate also have a greater likelihood of taking initiative, which is why their instructors give them good feedback and those who are less willing, negative feedback.

Unlike earlier research, academic productivity is not always ensured by a student's communication skills. According to some research, communication skills might have a detrimental impact on students' academic productivity by using communication tools to obstruct focus and cause distractions. Thompson (2017) claims that one of the reasons kids struggle with focus and memorising is because frequent texting creates a habit of constant partial attention. Additionally,

it was discovered that students' communication skills had no discernible effect on their academic progress based on the Shah et al. (2020) research.

The primary goal of this research is to investigate how communication skills affect the academic productivity of students studying civil engineering at a Philippine university. The purpose of this research is also to find out how students of civil engineering interact with one another and what obstacles they face. Finally, the purpose of this research is to give information on communication to assist students achieve academic success and enhance their communication skills via a deeper investigation of the experiences and perspectives of Civil Engineering students.

The purpose of this study is to further knowledge about the impact of communication skills on the academic productivity of students pursuing degrees in civil engineering by examining the usage of communication in these programmes. The study's findings may point to problems that need to be resolved in regards to the connection between students studying civil engineering and their academic productivity in terms of communication skills. Additionally, the findings can provide the Commission on Higher Education a base of knowledge about how students can improve their communication skills, which might raise their level of academic productivity overall.

### *Statement of the Problem*

The study aims to examine the role of Communication Skills on the Academic Productivity of Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the common forms of communication strategies currently in use among Civil Engineering students?
- ii. What are the communication challenges that Civil Engineering students encounter in their academic pursuits?
- iii. How can the Communication Skills of Civil Engineering students contribute to their Academic Productivity?

### **METHODOLOGY**

This section presents the necessary data gathering procedures involved in the study. This includes the discussion of the research design, informants of the study, research instrument, data gathering procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

To attain the research aims and objectives of this study, a qualitative research method was utilized. According to Jeffers (2022), qualitative research is an inquiry process for understanding a social phenomenon within its natural setting. Additionally, this method enables informants to describe

how, why, or what they were feeling, thinking, and going through during a significant event of interest (Tenny et al., 2022). As stated in Albalawi & Nadeem (2020), the application of qualitative approaches places a strong emphasis on learning more about administering, interpreting language, and evaluating the quality of communication. This type of research method was chosen because it focuses on the essence of a phenomenon from the perspectives of people who have experienced it. Accordingly, we used a qualitative research method to further explore the students' experiences and perceptions about the role of Communication Skills on their Academic Productivity.

The informants of this study are the Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines, as we aim to explore their experiences in communicating with their fellow Civil Engineering students throughout the past semesters up until the present. We collectively agreed to draw responses from a random sample of students. However, there were only a total of 8 responses to the online interview. We have decided to include all the responses of informants, and they were expected to represent the perception of Civil Engineering students who are currently studying at the said educational institution.

In order to gather the data we needed for this study, the research instrument that we utilized was the structured interview method. Structured interviews, also referred to as standardized interviews, are the most common form of interview, consisting of a prepared series of questions that are comparable in both wording and arrangement that we would ask to each respondent in a similar manner (Nor Rashidi et al., 2014). We chose this research instrument due to its advantages, a structured interview reduces the context effects and the biases since we asked the same questions to each informant in the same order, therefore increasing the credibility of the data results. (George & Merkus, 2023) In the context of this study, the structured interview was given through a Google Form link, the questions we asked were open-ended and the informants had the freedom to express their answers in a sentence form, this is because we wanted to get the full insights of the informants about the topic being studied. For the data gathering procedure, these are the following steps that we performed: First, we sought the approval of the interview questionnaire and its dissemination. Upon the approval of the questions and consent to conduct the study, we proceeded in disseminating the interview questionnaire to the first year Civil Engineering students with the help of each section's mayors. The questionnaire was sent as a link that will direct them to Google Forms, and they were communicated via Messenger. We also sought the assistance of the higher year Civil Engineerings students for the dissemination of the link to their respective group chats. After the data collection, we analyzed the results by using thematic analysis.

According to Caulfield (2019), thematic analysis is an approach to analyzing qualitative data that is commonly used in a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. In addition, this approach organizes data that can be illustrated with the use of evidence or examples that will represent the data across themes that are relevant to what the author is demonstrating (Dawadi,

2020). In using thematic analysis, we examined and categorized the acquired data that comes up repeatedly and merged it into major themes that center around our research questions.

We conducted the data gathering procedure under the compliance of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 protects the Human Right of Privacy. This ensures that any personal information given by the informants remains anonymous and confidential. Before beginning the data collection, the informants were informed about the purpose of the study. We presented them with an informed consent form that details the purpose, procedure, risks and benefits, and confidentiality for the data gathered. We have also made it certain that participation was voluntary. Should they wish to withdraw from the study, they had the absolute right to do so.

## RESULTS

The following section presents the results obtained from the data gathering phase of the study. Analysis of the responses gathered from the conducted online interviews identified 12 major themes. These were:

### *Casual Conversation*

Upon asking the informants about the way they usually communicate with their fellow Civil Engineering students with regards to their school projects and assignments, most of them stated that they prefer having casual conversation.

*"We usually communicate casually through electronic devices and sometimes we do chitchats." - Informant 2*

*"Casual yet respectful." - Informant 6*

### *Proper Time Management & Communication through Digital Platforms*

With regard to how they effectively communicate with their group members who differ in schedules and responsibilities, the recurring pattern of their answers was about ensuring their time management and conducting their conversations with the use of different digital platforms.

*"Of course, we are having a group chat then we are having a meeting so that we can set a date when and where we can all agree to do the task - Informant 2*

*"To make sure everyone can communicate effectively in group projects, we first decide on a time when most of us can meet, maybe in the evenings or weekends. We also use messaging apps like Messenger to share updates and ask questions when we can't meet face-to-face. Lastly, we make a list of tasks using apps like Google Docs so everyone knows what they need to do." - Informant 3*

*“To ensure effective communication and coordination despite different schedules, we set clear goals and deadlines, use digital tools like shared calendars, and communicate regularly through messaging apps or email. We're flexible with meeting times and work asynchronously when needed, staying supportive of each other's responsibilities.” - Informant 5*

□ *Misunderstanding & Lack of Confidence in Sharing and Clarification & Encouragement*

The informants mentioned the following obstacles that they have encountered: misunderstandings and lack of confidence in sharing, and how they overcame these through clarification and encouragement.

*“The biggest communication obstacle we faced was when some group members didn't share their progress regularly, causing confusion and delays.” - Informant 3*

*“For me, the biggest communication obstacle is when the one who I talk to didn't pay attention on what I said which usually lead to misunderstanding.” - Informant 4*

*“The biggest communication obstacle we've encountered is misunderstandings due to unclear instructions or expectations. To address this, we've started emphasizing the importance of clarifying any doubts or uncertainties right from the start. We make sure to ask questions if something isn't clear and encourage open communication within the group. Additionally, we've started using visual aids like diagrams or examples to supplement verbal instructions, which has helped to reduce misunderstandings significantly.” - Informant 5*

□ *Better Academic Performance & Confidence in Speaking* All the informants agreed that they experience better

academic performance with the help of their Communication Skills, and most of them stated that not only do they observe better academic results but also confidence in communicating, specifically raising their questions and expressing their ideas.

*“Yes, having good Communication Skills helps me do better in school because I can ask questions when I don't understand something and share ideas with my classmates. When I communicate well, I am able to work better in group projects and understand what is required of me on assignments.” - Informant 3*

*“Yes, I definitely believe that strong Communication Skills contribute to better academic performance. Clear communication is essential for understanding course materials, collaborating*

*effectively with classmates on projects and assignments, and expressing ideas clearly in exams or presentations. When I can communicate my thoughts and ideas effectively, it helps me engage more deeply with the material and facilitates productive interactions with peers and instructors. Additionally, good Communication Skills can also improve my ability to ask questions, seek help when needed, and participate actively in class discussions, all of which are important aspects of academic success.” - Informant 5*

*“I believe that Communication Skills help you perform better academically because many academic tasks involve collaboration, whether it's working on group projects or participating in class discussions. Strong Communication Skills enable us to collaborate effectively with others and share our ideas to the class.” - Informant 7*

□ *Building of Networks & Preparation for Future Career* In response to the question about their insights on the

importance of having good Communication Skills in their program, the majority of the informants pointed out that it is necessary in order to build good relationships as well as prepare them for their future career path.

*“It is important to have a good comm skills for us to develop a good networking, hence we can build a good rapport and connection to my other co-engineers. And also, when speaking into clients, I can have the ability to persuade them in a nice way by having good comm skills.” - Informant 2*

*“Good communication allows us to better understand project needs, coordinate responsibilities, and share ideas with colleagues. It keeps everyone on the same page, eliminates mistakes, and helps to project success.” - Informant 3*

*“In my program, good Communication Skills are fundamental for effective collaboration, problem-solving, client interactions, presentations, and ensuring safety and compliance. Whether working in teams on projects, discussing complex engineering problems, interacting with clients and stakeholders, delivering presentations and reports, or adhering to safety protocols and regulations, clear communication plays a pivotal role. It not only enhances academic performance but also lays a strong foundation for success in future engineering careers, enabling students to navigate diverse professional scenarios with confidence and proficiency.” - Informant 5*

□ *Actively Listening & Being Collaborative*

Many of the informants emphasized the importance of active listening and being collaborative in terms of improving their Communication Skills by interacting with their fellow Civil Engineering students as well as with their course instructors.

*“Listening very well. People tend to say it is easy to listen but one thing that I can advise to the other engineering students is to listen attentively to avoid miscommunications and misunderstandings that can cause conflicts.” - Informant 3*

*“One way to improve Communication Skills in interactions with instructors and fellow Civil Engineering students is by actively engaging in class discussions and asking questions. By participating in discussions, sharing ideas, and seeking clarification when needed, students can enhance their ability to articulate thoughts and concepts effectively. Additionally, actively listening to instructors and classmates during lectures, group meetings, or study sessions helps in understanding different perspectives and promotes effective communication. Another way to improve Communication Skills is by seeking feedback from instructors and peers on presentations, assignments, or project proposals. Constructive feedback allows students to identify areas for improvement and refine their communication techniques. Moreover, collaborating on group projects provides opportunities to practice teamwork, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills, contributing to overall communication proficiency. Finally, students can also benefit from attending communication workshops or seminars offered by the educational institution, which provide practical tips and strategies for enhancing verbal and written Communication Skills specific to the field of Civil Engineering.” - Informant 5*

*“When interacting with instructors and fellow Civil Engineering students, make sure to actively listen and focus on what the speaker is saying. Collaborate with your fellow students on group projects or study sessions and participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or organizations where you can practice Communication Skills in a supportive environment.” - Informant 7*

#### IV. DISCUSSION

This section provides a deeper analysis and interpretation of the results in the context of existing literature, as well as the discussion of the implications of the findings. Through conducting structured interviews and thematic analysis, the outcomes of this study have revealed several themes and provided valuable insights into the role of Communication Skills on the Academic Productivity of Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines.

The themes of casual conversation, proper time management, and communication through digital platforms, sought to answer the first research question regarding the communication strategies that

students most commonly use. According to Thornbury & Slade (2006) as cited in Willian (2020), casual conversation is one of the most common activities that people engage in. Despite the fact that people engaged in casual conversations do not have a practical purpose, they can often be perceived to be working collaboratively in order to accomplish a common goal. While casual conversations may seem pointless and insignificant, studies have shown that speakers use a variety of strategies in delivering their communicative objectives (Andreau et. al, 2010). This finding implies that casual conversation, despite its informal nature, serves as a means for Civil Engineering students to exchange ideas, clarify concepts, and seek assistance from their peers, all of which are essential for nurturing understanding and productivity in academic tasks.

Furthermore, proper time management was found to be a communication strategy that students use to optimize productivity in group tasks. Time management as well as effective communication are crucial in any group activities to ensure coordination, setting of deadlines, and completion of tasks at hand. As stated by Nasrullah & Khan (2015), time management is essential for enhancing students' academic attainment and performance. It is a skill that every student should have, and this includes setting goals and priorities. In the field of Civil Engineering wherein projects often follow strict deadlines, this finding highlights the importance of communicating clearly and proactively with group members despite having different schedules to ensure timely completion, effective allocation of time and resources, and minimize delays,

Consequently, the use of digital communication platforms enable students to further communicate, share information, and connect with each other. The term "digital natives" were used to describe today's students, having grown up in an environment where digital technologies dominate every aspect of their lives (Youssef et. al, 2022). This finding contributes to the growing reliance on technology in pursuit of collaboration and communication among students. In the same study conducted by Youssef et. al (2022), there is an indication that improved students' Academic Productivity heavily depends on the intensity of their use of digital technologies. The students' extensive use of digital platforms for their learning objectives such as searching academic references or participating in discussions and conversations, encourages students to be deeply involved in their studies which results in an increased Academic Productivity.

On the other hand, the themes of misunderstanding, lack of confidence in sharing and clarification, and encouragement answered the second research question regarding the communication challenges that most Civil Engineering students encounter in their academics. According to Lewis (1952), as cited in Diloyan (2017), the miscommunication caused by the teachers results in unproductive student learning outcomes as the students find it difficult to handle miscommunication in an effective way. As a result, students may feel disconnected from their peers during group discussions of their lecture. For instance, Zuoud (2018) explained that having poor

communication during lectures can affect the students' academic performance, as Communication Skills help the students gain trust and confidence all throughout their academic lives.

Other than miscommunication, lack of confidence in sharing and clarification is mentioned as one of the communication challenges that Civil Engineering students encounter academically as well. Lack of confidence in sharing and clarification can be identified as a result of the misunderstanding during lesson discussions. This problem does not only affect the student individually but also their performance in collaborative activities. According to Haq & Anwar (2016), the most common factor that prevents students from sharing knowledge with their peers is a lack of trust. In addition, the willingness of the students to share knowledge will depend on how close they are to each other. This finding can lead to a bigger problem that can affect the students significantly, as it can hinder them from communicating and expressing their thoughts and ideas to other students in the class.

Moreover, encouragement can help the students improve their enthusiasm for learning individually and collaboratively. As stated by Keller (2021), students can recall what they have studied in the lecture with the help of encouraging words. Despite the experience of poor communication and a lack of confidence in themselves, offering words of encouragement can motivate students to work efficiently on their projects and activities with their classmates. This can inspire the students to strive harder in order to achieve their goal of being successful. This does not only help students to motivate themselves in their academic performance but also in how they perceive themselves in the real world and how they can bring the best out of themselves.

Better academic performance, confidence in speaking, the building of networks, and preparation for future careers are the themes generated that answered our third research question on the contribution of Communication Skills to the academic success of the students. Communication Skills are crucial to achieving academic success. As mentioned by Lancehgs (2023), students who perform excellently in class, accompanied by the ability to express their ideas, ask questions, and seek help when necessary, have strong Communication Skills. This leads students to present their learnings in class and apply what they have learned to their tasks and assignments, which can show their Communication Skills in all forms of communication. Devito (2011), as cited in Anggeraini & Farozin (2019), noted that self-confidence influences an individual's interpersonal skills. Lancehgs (2023) also stated that when students have good Communication Skills, self-confidence emerges, which helps them express their ideas, thoughts, and opinions confidently in class. Students with confidence easily participate in class and actively engage in academic discourse. This result suggests that Communication Skills are relevant in academic institutions as they shape students into being confident and excel in their academic performance as a result of their Communication Skills.

As per Abid et al. (2022), interpersonal relationships contribute to the academic performance of students. The same study stated that being a good speaker helps students build positive relationships with others, which in turn encourages academic success and helps them develop into excellent speakers. As their field requires an individual to become used to being around many people, possessing excellent Communication Skills even during their education is vital and beneficial. The result revealed that the students' Communication Skills allow them to become more academically engaged and interact with others to create a strong connection with them. As mentioned, being a future Civil Engineer falls under the requirement of being used to a large crowd. Hence, practicing their Communication Skills will sharpen their abilities and put them to good use in their future workplace.

In line with this, mutual understanding and effective collaboration drive the students to achieve academic success. According to Vani & Naik (2023), active listening is a significant aspect of Communication Skills and is a factor in academic success; students succeed in acquiring good Communication Skills once they become good listeners. Vani & Naik (2023) added that being an active listener allows students to analyze and understand the information conveyed. Furthermore, Collaborative Learning (COL), as defined by Albuhasan & Hamid (2021), as cited in Norman, Ph.D. (2022), involves pairs and group-based activities that involve students interacting with one another to fulfill their educational goals successfully. Working in groups practices the students' Communication Skills and broadens their knowledge of a topic; this helps them improve their academic performance. This implies that academic success is achieved by actively listening to what the speaker is saying, analyzing it to understand its context, and working effectively with other people through communication and later arriving at positive learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This section provides the summary of the study, as well as the recommendations of the researchers to the Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines.

*Based on the Findings of the Study, the Following Conclusions were Drawn:*

It was found that Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines prefer to conduct their conversations in a casual manner, whether it be for school-related activities and projects or for interaction purposes.

The proper time management is one of the communication strategies that Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines utilizes, it is necessary for them to agree on a certain schedule to accomplish their academic tasks, additionally, the students of the

educational institution take advantage of the digital communication platforms for a more efficient communication process.

The communication challenges that Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines face are miscommunication and lack of confidence.

These two barriers in communication can drastically affect not only the communication process but also the academic performance of the students, especially when working in groups.

For the Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines, having confidence and good Communication Skills result in a better academic performance, from asking questions, active class participation, and leading for group activities, all of these contribute to the academic achievement of the students.

Communicating to build networks is essential for the Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines, having good relationships with others is an important factor for enhancing the academic excellence of the students, and this also prepares them for their future careers in the field.

In terms of communicating, it is not just all about speaking, it also requires active listening and collaboration. Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines emphasize the importance of this aspect especially when working for group projects in order to attain academic success.

*As we arrived at the Stated Conclusions, the Following Recommendations were Made:*

We recommend that Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines join social groups and organizations to enhance their Communication Skills.

It is recommended that Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines try different communication strategies that will help them improve their Communication Skills.

Finally, we recommend that the Civil Engineering students at an educational institution in the Philippines utilize their Communication Skills to improve their Academic Productivity.

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