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Article

Self-Perceived Communication Strengths and Their Association with Professional Communication Readiness

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Abstract

While communication competence is recognized as essential for academic success and professional transition, gaps remain in understanding the relationship between students' self-perceptions and actual performance, particularly in rural public secondary schools. This study examined the association between self-perceived communication strengths and professional communication readiness among 102 Grade 11 students in a rural public high school. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected through a structured survey and performance-based tasks aligned with the subject Effective Communication and evaluated using analytic rubrics. Statistical analyses included mean, standard deviation, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation.

Findings revealed a competence–confidence gap: students reported relatively high self-perceived communication strengths but demonstrated low professional readiness. This discrepancy was most evident in oral communication, where perceived readiness exceeded actual performance. Correlation results showed that self-perceived strengths were generally not associated with actual readiness, except for listening skills, which had a weak but significant relationship. These findings highlight the limitations of self-assessment and underscore the need for performance-based evaluation and reflective learning strategies to better align students' perceptions with their actual communication skills.

Keywords: *communication competence, professional communication readiness, competence–confidence gap, descriptive-correlational design, rural public secondary school*

1. Introduction

Success in today's professional environments requires more than just technical proficiency; it demands strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build meaningful connections through effective communication. Indeed, scholarly research identifies communication as a core 21st-century competency linked to employability and life outcomes (Hidayatulloh et. al., 2022). This encompasses fundamental skills like active listening, empathy, open-mindedness, and self-assurance, which are essential in numerous professional fields (Salikhova et al., 2023). In fact, companies frequently rank communication skills among the most important traits they look for in potential employees (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021), highlighting the importance of developing these capabilities in pre-college education.

However, a persistent gap exists between this expectation and actual performance. Employers continue to report deficiencies among graduates, particularly in interview performance and written application documents (Krishnan et al., 2019; Khairuddin et al., 2022). Many graduates lack key competencies such as negotiation, presentation, and interviewing, raising concerns about their professional readiness. These issues underscore the importance of examining not only externally assessed communication skills but also learners' perceptions of their own communicative strengths.

Recent research positions communication as a future-ready skill that can be intentionally developed and assessed within K–12 education (Ober et al., 2025). At the Senior High School level, communication skills are positively associated with work readiness indicators, including work attitude, social skills, and organizational awareness, particularly among Technical-Vocational-Livelihood students (Yoshida et al., 2025). Nevertheless, both students and teachers report relatively low levels of competence, with teachers consistently providing more critical evaluations across communication domains (Yoshida et al., 2025). Parallel findings from vocational and teacher education contexts further confirm that communication is a key factor in readiness across professional pathways (Hidayatulloh et al., 2022; Carcueva et al., 2025).

A critical concern lies in the potential mismatch between self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and actual readiness. SPCC strongly influences willingness to communicate, yet students often report limited confidence or communicative experience (Croucher et al., 2016). Moreover, many students demonstrate only moderate communication proficiency overall (Salikhova et al., 2023). From a workplace perspective, communication readiness is increasingly understood as relational and context-dependent, requiring scaffolding, coaching, and applied learning experiences (Miller et al., 2025).

Despite this growing body of research, limited studies have examined how Senior High School students' self-perceived communication strengths relate to multidimensional indicators of professional communication readiness, including teacher evaluations and workplace-oriented expectations. Existing work has addressed related constructs such as communication apprehension and performance skills (Autman et al., 2016), but few studies explicitly connect these variables during the critical transition from school to work or further education.

Accordingly, this study investigates the association between students' self-perceived communication strengths and their actual professional communication readiness. By comparing students' self-assessments with their demonstrated performance in authentic classroom tasks, this research seeks to determine how closely their confidence aligns with the standards required in professional settings. Ultimately, these findings aim to identify potential gaps in communicative competence and inform

targeted interventions for enhancing the 'Effective Communication' subject, ensuring that learners are better prepared for their transition into higher education and the workplace.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to determine the association between Grade 11 students' self-perceived communication strengths and their actual professional communication readiness, as anchored in the learning competencies of the core subject *Effective Communication* under the Strengthened Senior High School curriculum. Specifically, the study aims to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of their academic strand and sex, assess the level of their actual professional communication readiness based on performance in tasks aligned with the subject's learning competencies, and evaluate their self-perceived communication strengths across key domains such as oral communication, written communication, listening skills, and professional document preparation. It also seeks to determine whether there are significant differences in professional communication readiness among students when grouped according to academic strand, and to examine whether a significant relationship exists between students' self-perceived communication strengths and their actual professional communication readiness.

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the association between self-perceived communication strengths and the actual professional communication readiness of 102 Grade 11 students from a rural public secondary school in Quirino Province, Philippines (SY 2025–2026). Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across the different strands. This design was chosen to assess associations between variables in a natural educational setting without manipulation, facilitating an objective investigation into the competence–confidence gap.

Data was collected using two primary instruments. First, a self-made questionnaire was developed to measure students' perceived abilities in oral, written, listening, and document preparation skills via a 4-point Likert scale. To ensure internal consistency, the instrument underwent pilot testing, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicating reliability for the study population. Second, actual communication readiness was measured using performance-based tasks aligned with the subject's learning competencies in Effective Communication. These tasks were evaluated using validated analytic rubrics that assessed dimensions such as clarity, organization, and accuracy. The procedure involved participants first completing the self-perception survey, followed by the administration of performance tasks in standard classroom settings. All data were anonymized and tracked using unique identifiers to ensure an accurate match between survey responses and performance outcomes.

Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were first computed to summarize self-perceived strengths and actual performance scores. To examine differences across academic strands, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed. In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess the relationship between perceived strengths and actual performance. Throughout the study, ethical standards were strictly observed: participation was voluntary, confidentiality was ensured, and institutional approval was obtained prior to data collection.

4. Results

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	53	51.96
	Female	49	48.04
Academic Strand	STEM	34	33.33
	ASSH	49	48.04
	TVL-FCS/AFA	19	18.63

n=102

Table 1 presents the respondents' demographic profile by sex and academic strand. A total of 102 respondents participated in the study. By sex, 53 respondents (51.96%) are male, and 49 (48.04%) are female, indicating a relatively balanced distribution between the two genders.

In terms of academic strand, most respondents belong to the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities strand (48.04%), followed by Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (33.33%). In comparison, the Technical-Professional track, which includes Family and Consumer Sciences and Agri-Fishery Arts (18.63%), has the smallest representation. The presence of respondents from different strands indicates diversity in academic backgrounds, which may influence their communication experiences and readiness.

Table 2. Level of Actual Professional Communication Readiness of Respondents Based on Their Performance in Tasks Aligned with the Learning Competencies of the Subject *Effective Communication*

Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. Oral Communication	1.75	.650	Very Low Readiness
2. Written Communication	2.16	.737	Low Readiness
3. Listening	2.26	.882	Low Readiness
4. Professional Document Preparation	2.11	.644	Low Readiness
Overall	2.06	.655	Low Readiness

Legend:

3.25 – 4.00 Very high Readiness
2.50 – 3.24 High Readiness
1.75 – 2.49 Low readiness
1.00 – 1.74 Very Low Readiness

The assessment of Actual Professional Communication Readiness reveals a noticeable gap between current curriculum goals and the respondents' actual communicative skills. With an overall mean of 2.06 (Low Readiness) and standard deviation of 0.655, which indicates that students struggle to meet basic professional standards across all tested competencies. Among the domains, Oral Communication recorded the lowest mean score and standard deviation (M = 1.75, SD = 0.650) and is categorized as Very Low Readiness, highlighting it as a primary area of concern. These findings are consistent with the study by Yoshida and Guzman (2025), who found that Senior High School Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) students exhibit low communication skills as rated by both students and teachers. This "Very Low" performance implies that while students may navigate social interactions with ease, they lack the "code-switching" ability and technical precision required for

professional communication. This highlights a critical need for structured, performance-based communication training to bridge the gap between academic instruction and actual workplace readiness.

Table 3. Level of Students' Self-Perceived Communication Strengths Across the Different Communication Domains

Communication Domain	Grand Mean	SD	Description
Oral Communication	2.93	.458	High Readiness
Written Communication	2.91	.510	High Readiness
Listening	3.16	.455	High Readiness
Professional Document Preparation	2.84	.545	High Readiness
Overall Grand mean	2.96	0.493	High Readiness

Legend:

3.25 – 4.00 Very high Readiness
2.50 – 3.24 High Readiness
1.75 – 2.49 Low readiness
1.00 – 1.74 Very Low Readiness

Table 3's findings reveal a discrepancy between students' high self-perceived communication competence and lower actual performance scores, illustrating a "perception-performance gap" in which students conflate everyday social fluency with professional mastery. This overestimation of abilities suggests that students' high self-confidence may hinder their professional growth by reducing motivation to engage in rigorous, performance-based practice needed to meet industry standards. Such a psychological gap highlights the risk of overconfidence acting as a barrier to skill development and readiness for professional communication demands. These insights align with research emphasizing the importance of aligning self-perception with actual competence to foster effective learning and professional preparedness. Aziz and Faisal (2025) discuss similar dynamics in communication competence, noting that high self-perceived ability does not always correspond with actual skills, which can impact communication apprehension and readiness for real-world interactions. Addressing this gap through targeted feedback and performance-based training is critical to help students develop accurate self-assessment and improve their communication proficiency.

Table 4. Level of Students' Self-Perceived Communication Strengths Across the Different Communication Domains when they are Grouped by Academic Strand

Communication Domains	STEM			ASSH			TVL – FCS/AFA		
	Mean	SD	Desc	Mean	SD	Desc	Mean	SD	Desc
Oral Communication	2.90	0.403	High Readiness	2.89	0.477	High Readiness	3.11	0.481	High Readiness
Written Communication	2.96	0.568	High Readiness	2.83	0.460	High Readiness	3.04	0.507	High Readiness
Listening	3.23	0.451	High Readiness	3.08	0.399	High Readiness	3.27	0.570	Very High Readiness
Professional Document Preparation	2.94	0.540	High Readiness	2.67	0.491	High Readiness	3.06	0.580	High Readiness
Grand Mean	3.01	0.495	High Readiness	2.87	0.458	High Readiness	3.12	0.536	High Readiness

Legend:

3.25 – 4.00 Very high Readiness
2.50 – 3.24 High Readiness
1.75 – 2.49 Low readiness

1.00 – 1.74 Very Low Readiness

When self-perceptions are analyzed by strand, the Technical Professional Track–FCS/AFA students reported the highest overall self-confidence (M=3.12), followed by STEM (M=3.01) and ASSH (M=2.87). Table 4's finding that Technical-Professional students report higher self-confidence than Academic Strand students aligns with evidence that practical, hands-on curricula foster greater self-efficacy than theoretical tracks, as shown by Yoshida and Guzman (2025). This trend implies that the immersion in industry-simulated environments inherent to the Technical-Professional track allows students to see the immediate application of their skills, thereby boosting their perceived readiness. Conversely, students in more theoretical tracks, such as the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities, may perceive their skills more conservatively because they have fewer opportunities to test their communication against concrete, real-world workplace expectations.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance on the Level of Students' Self-Perceived Communication Strengths Across the Different Communication Domains when they are Grouped by Academic Strand

Communication Domain	F	p-value	Decision
Oral Communication	1.564	.220	Fail to reject Ho
Written Communication	1.568	.220	Fail to reject Ho
Listening	1.717	.192	Fail to reject Ho
Professional Document Preparation	4.693bc	.014*	Reject Ho
Grand Mean	2.385	.104	Fail to reject Ho

$p \leq 0.05$ is significant

The ANOVA results in Table 5 indicate that, among the four communication domains, only professional document preparation shows a statistically significant difference across academic strands ($F = 4.693$, $p = .014$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis for this domain. In contrast, oral and written communication and listening skills did not differ significantly, suggesting a comparable level of self-perceived competence across strands.

The significant variation in professional document preparation highlights an uneven development of workplace-oriented communication skills across academic tracks. This finding supports the study by Yoshida and Guzman (2025), which reports that Senior High School students in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) strand tend to demonstrate lower proficiency in communication skills, particularly in structured and formal forms such as written and nonverbal communication. Such disparities may be attributed to differences in curricular emphasis, with some strands providing greater exposure to formal documentation tasks, technical writing, and real-world communication scenarios than others.

Moreover, while general communication skills appear to be consistently developed across strands, the specialized nature of professional document preparation may require more explicit instruction and practice. The lack of significant differences in other domains suggests that foundational communication competencies are addressed uniformly; however, strand-specific training influences more advanced, workplace-relevant skills.

These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, particularly for strands with less exposure to formal documentation practices. Integrating standardized training in professional writing, such as report writing, resume preparation, and business correspondence, across all strands could help bridge this gap. Such efforts are consistent with broader educational research advocating

for the integration of communication skill development within all academic tracks to enhance students' overall work readiness and adaptability in professional environments.

Table 6. Relationship Between the Actual Professional Communication Readiness and the Respondents' Self-perceived Communication Strengths

Domain	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
1. Oral Communication	0.040	0.688	Fail to reject Ho	Very weak correlation
2. Written Communication	0.142	0.154	Fail to reject Ho	Very weak correlation
3. Listening Skill	0.211	0.034	Reject Ho	Weak correlation
4. Professional document preparation	0.066	0.512	Fail to reject Ho	Very weak correlation

Legend:

±0.80 – ±1.00	*Very strong correlation*
±0.60 – ±0.79	*Strong correlation*
±0.40 – ±0.59	*Moderate correlation*
±0.20 – ±0.39	*Weak correlation*
±0.00 – ±0.19	*Very weak correlation*

The correlation data in Table 6 provides the final statistical "anchor" for this study, showing that confidence is generally not associated with actual competence. For the Oral (r=0.040; p =0.688), Written (r=0.142; p=0.154), and Professional Document Preparation (r=0.066; p=0.512) domains, the relationships are categorized as Very Weak and non-significant (p > .05), indicating that a student's belief in their ability does not translate to high-quality performance. However, Listening Skill stands as a notable exception, showing a significant, yet weak, correlation (r=0.211, p=0.034). "Table 6's weak correlations between actual readiness and self-perception—except for listening skills—mirror Welesilassie and Nikolov's (2024) findings that listening-related factors significantly influence self-awareness and willingness to communicate among senior high school learners. This finding implies that listening serves as a critical "metacognitive bridge"; students who are better at processing spoken information are more likely to develop a grounded understanding of their own performance levels. Therefore, improving listening skills could be a useful way for teachers to help students better understand their abilities and reduce gaps in their professional communication readiness.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study provide a clear picture of Grade 11 students' professional communication readiness. Although the participants demonstrate a strong belief in their own abilities, a noticeable gap exists between their perceived competence and actual performance. While students rate their oral, written, and listening skills as "high," their performance in professional communication tasks remains low. This discrepancy is particularly evident in oral communication, where many students struggle to apply learned skills in real-world professional contexts.

Further analysis shows that students' academic strand does not significantly influence their level of confidence across the different communication domains. However, a significant difference was observed among strands in terms of professional document preparation, suggesting that certain strands may provide more exposure to formal writing tasks than others. In addition, the results indicate that there is generally no significant relationship between students' self-perceived communication strengths and their actual performance. The only exception is listening skills, which demonstrated a small but significant association with professional communication readiness, implying that listening may serve as a foundational skill in overall communication development.

Overall, the study highlights a gap between students' confidence and competence that warrants attention. Given that students tend to overestimate their readiness, the *Effective Communication* subject should incorporate more practical and performance-based learning experiences rather than relying solely on theoretical instruction. Such measures are essential in ensuring that Grade 11 students are adequately prepared for the communication demands of higher education and the workplace.

6. Recommendations

To bridge the identified "confidence-competence gap," it is primarily recommended that teachers' instruction may shift from theoretical lectures toward a more rigorous, performance-based approach. For oral communication, which showed the lowest level of readiness, teachers may prioritize high-engagement activities such as formal presentations, debates, and workplace role-play simulations. In addition, written communication and professional document preparation may be strengthened through guided practice in drafting formal emails, technical reports, and other professional documents. Furthermore, listening skills may be treated as a foundational competency, developed through structured exercises such as summarizing technical discussions and responding to real-time spoken tasks. These classroom activities may be evaluated using analytic rubrics to help students align their high self-perceptions with actual professional skills.

Beyond classroom instruction, institutional support can be further reinforced by organizing training workshops and seminars led by professionals, exposing students to actual and authentic academic and workplace demands. Finally, to build upon these findings, future researchers may expand the scope of this study by utilizing larger, more diverse samples across different school settings. Furthermore, longitudinal research is also recommended to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the proposed enhancement program, ensuring that instructional strategies remain relevant as professional communication standards continue to evolve.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Informed consent was obtained from participants; confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured.

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Conflicts of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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