

<https://doi.org/10.48047/AFJBS.7.8.2025.597-608>



African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: <http://www.afjbs.com>



Research Paper

Open Access

**IDENTIFYING AWARENESS AND CHALLENGES OF
COMMUNICATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
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Volume:7Issue,8Aug2025

Received:20Jun,2025

Accepted:15July,2025

Published:22Aug2025

[doi:10.48047/AFJBS.7.8.2025.597-608](https://doi.org/10.48047/AFJBS.7.8.2025.597-608)

ABSTRACT: Communication is the foundation of human needs. It is the basic formula of human relationships. The act of delivering information through any means it can be verbal non-verbal or through technology is said to be communication. The objective of this research is to find out the awareness level and challenges related to communication skills among students in different educational settings. 124 undergraduate students were selected using simple random sampling method. Data was collected from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20. One way ANOVA test was used to find the difference among different variables. Result depicts that majority of students (90%) agreed that having good communication skills makes a student a good learner. half of the student (50%) believe that communication skills are extremely important for their academic success. More than half of the students (70%) stated that they are hesitate to respond due to weak communication abilities. Majority of students (90%) agreed that universities should provide a course for improving communication skills.

Keywords-Awareness, Challenges, Communication Skills

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the deliberate act of expressing, receiving, and comprehending messages comprising factual information, sentiments, ideas, and desires by two or more people using common symbols. It is a method of exchanging information (**Chacko 2019**). It is considered to be the core of all the human activities, it is because whatever we, in any form will involve communication in it, the entire human life revolves around communication. Communication is considered as the lifeblood of humans, as every single person born has to communicate since birth through crying, kicking, smiling, giggling etc. through which humans share emotions, thoughts and ideas. Communication skills are necessity of present situation. The proficiency to communicate is the primary differentiation which distinguishes humans and animals and also from one individual to another. Communication skills is integrated skill of reading, writing, skills required to able to effectively interact with the peer group, the communicative oral and written fluency, listening skills. students with appropriate communication skills perform better in both their personal and professional growth. India has one of the world's youngest populations. Youth are a country's most viable and promising human resource, not only in terms of demographic structure, but also in terms of social structure. Youth are a powerful force for sustainable growth, also important agents of social change, economic progress, and technical innovation, if this human resource is used effectively, it has the ability to be extremely beneficial to the country's economic progress- (**Youth in India 2022**). the National Education Policy has come with more holistic and multidisciplinary approach towards education, taking inspiration from vanbhatt's Kadambari which describes there are 64 types of art forms which are considered education as knowledge of 64 kalas or arts which prominently talks about importance of communication skills. In modern terms it is known as liberal arts which must brought back to the main stream education in 21st century. NEP envisages the blend of holistic education—including vocational education making it convenient and easy-going process for the students, so that they can design their own passage of study and life plans, communication is non less than the other skills which is important to be grasped (**National Education Policy 2020**). It prominently gives emphasis on development of language skill both in mother tongue and multilingualism, language development will strive to build literacy and acquisition of knowledge. Language is closely associated with the identity of an individual thus language development will help them in better communication. The curriculum frame work has also emphasized on the skill of reading and writing, learning home language as well as second or foreign language acquisition becomes important for communicative competence (**National Curriculum Framework 2005**). National report published on bench marking for verbal reading fluency with reading comprehension and numeracy the study was conducted on 86000 students of grade 3 from 10,000 schools which included state government, government aided, private recognized and central government school. it was surveyed on 20 languages; the survey result has established benchmark for ORL i.e., oral reading fluency and comprehension and benchmark for numeracy in 20 different Indian language has been established (**Foundational Learning Survey Report 2020 (NCERT)**). (**Skill Hub Initiative (HIS) under PMKVY3.0**) SHI has come up with an initiative to mainstream the vocational education with the conventional education integrating them both to bring reform in the education-skill system in the country, it will actualize the intent of NEP 2020 on grounds, it will also serve as a complementary resource for the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,

which was established in 2015. Skill hubs are nodal centres which are identified to provide vocational practice and skill development in a well-defined pathway since early stage (introducing it since grade 6th and further). In today's scenario students get interconnected with each other on mass scale, whether that is exchange of information, current news, thoughts, emotions, feelings aur any point of view, when students carry out this ability in an impressive way it is called communication skill, also this is considered the most critical factor in order to maintain flourishing relationships with peers, teacher, family and surrounding. Thus, students need to learn and practise communication skill to avoid problematic circumstances, misunderstanding around them. (Sabah 2020).

AIM - To assess the communication skills of undergraduate students.

Objective: -

To investigate awareness level, challenges related to communication skills and suggestion about a communication skill course among undergraduate students under different educational setting.

METHODOLOGY

Study participants

The survey study was conducted on undergraduate students (17-25 years) of Banaras Hindu University, enrolled in 3-year degree courses. Simple random sampling method was used to collect the data.

Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire tool was prepared to collect the data. Questionnaire included different kind of data such as demographic details (name, age, gender, educational status), level of communication, challenges while learning communication skills, perception about communication as a course etc.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation, were calculated for the age groups. A One-Way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to evaluate the differences in communication levels between the age groups. This test was also conducted to compare the communication levels across demographic areas. A P-value less than 0.05 was deemed statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Distribution of respondents on the basis of their Socio-economic status (N=124)

variables	Frequency(N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	48	38
Female	76	61

Age		
17-19	30	37
20-22	94	
mean		22
Faculty of students		
Arts	50	41
Science	32	26
Social science	20	16
agriculture	2	1
Commerce	8	6
law	12	10
Demographic Area		
Urban	62	50
Rural	32	26
Semi-urban	30	24

Table 1 represents the distribution of age, gender, demographic location, and faculty of students. Majority among students were female (61%) belongs to 10-30 year of age range and male were (38%). number of females was high among the respondents (38). And the students were from the arts faculty (41%) then science (26%), Social science (16%) agriculture (1%, commerce (6%), law (10%). among all of these agriculture students was very less (1%).and in most of the students were belong from urban area (50%) rural area (26%) and semi-urban was very less which is (24%).

Table-2

Distribution of respondents based on their overall awareness of communication skills.

Students' overall awareness of communication skills		
	N	%
Very low	4	3
Low	8	7
Moderate	66	53
high	42	34
Very high	4	3
	124	100

The table 2 shows the percentage of overall awareness of communication of students, in which (53%) students stated about their communication skills are at moderate level. according to them communication skill include writing skills, reading skills, oration skills, active learning skills, presentation skills (83%) agree with it and (85%) students feel in the interest of being a good students they need communication skills apart from this (50%) students opinionated that communication skills are very important for academics success, but (61%) students hesitate in responding the answers because of poor communication skills by reason of fear of speaking, lack of confidence and also they hesitate expressing their emotions. Communication skills overall is considered to be supreme generic skill which is

must for students, student learn how to communicate in and outside classroom through discussion, presentation inside classroom, it is foremost important for their career development. (Iksan *et al.*, 2012).

Problem: to check if the communication skills level of students equals to communication level of standard value.

H0 (null hypothesis): there is no difference between observed value and expected value in communication level of participants.

Table-3

One Sample results

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Communication skills rate	3.27	.772	-17.606	61	.000	-1.726	-1.92	-1.53

Note: Test Value = 5 (Very High)

One Sample T-test was used to assess if the communication skill rate of respondents differs significantly from standard value. The results reveal a considerable difference into the communication skill rate of respondents in comparison to standard value. $t(61) = -17.606$, $p < .001$). There is sharp contrast between observed value and expected value. thus, H0 is not supported. Majority of the respondents evaluate their communication skill as moderate level.

Problem: To determine if the communication skill rate is equal among different demographic area.

H0 (null hypothesis): there is no difference between communication skill of students among different demographic area.

Table-4

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Result

Test of Homogeneity of variance						
Demographic area	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Rural	3.11	1.150	6.730	.002	4.838	.11
Urban	3.52	.508				
Semi urban	2.80	.561				
Group Differences						
Demographic area	Mean Difference		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval (LL-UL)		
Urban- Semi urban	.716		.001	.29 1.14		

One-Way ANOVA was attuned to ascertain the difference between demographic area and awareness about communication skills of participants from different demographic area. The result reveals a significant difference ($F_{2, 62} = 4.838, p > 0.05$) of communication level among students of urban and semi-urban. To check the considerable difference among varied demographic area post-hoc juxtaposition was accomplished using Games-Howell. The test indicates that mean score of urban (3.52, SD= .508) was significantly differ to semi-urban (M= 2.80, SD= .561). Thus, H0 is not supported.

Table -5

Distribution of participants on the Significance of Communication Skills for Students

construct	Very unimportant		unimportant		neutral		important		Very important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Writing skills	22	20	8	20	8	23	42	30	44	16
Listening skills	24	22	6	15	8	23	8	6	74	26
Oration skills	20	18	6	15	8	23	32	23	54	19
Presentation skills	20	18	12	30	6	18	30	22	52	18
Reading skills	24	22	8	20	4	12	26	19	58	21

Table 5 focus on writing skills, listening skills, oration skills, presentation skills, and reading skills. drawing the inference that students from BHU have good listening skills and also have the highest response followed by writing, presentation, and reading. Around 12% of the answered ascertained to have low reading skills. Through presentation skill verbal communication can be developed and nurtured through these presentations, open discussion in a class or group. Listening skills can be presented as showing interest and attention. Presentation is an academic activity that is used often in class. The result showed that students can do presentation, confidently using current technology. In the table 20% students respond very unimportant, 23% is neutral, 30% important and 16% very important. Good writing skills are measured through the clarity of the writing, the flow of arguments, using simple and easy to understand sentences. The level of education in educational institution are deciding factors in communication skill learning , degree of maturity of students helps them to enable them to better know and organize and sharpen their communication skill which eventually helps them in mastering mental flexibility which will make them face problems and deal with them with a positive approach all this approach makes students behavior better and more acceptable , with the evolution of communication skills (**Sabbah et al., 2020**).

Table-6

Distribution of respondents hinge on the necessity of acquiring communication skills in the present context

(a)-Distribution of respondents on the needs of learning communication skills in current scenario		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	6	4
Agree	52	41
Strongly agree	66	53
(b)-Distribution of respondents regarding a course at university to teach communication skills		
	N	%
Yes	114	92
No	0	0
Maybe	10	8
(c)-Distribution of respondents on learning these communication skills		
	N	%
Yes	72	58
No	10	8
I always think but never tried	42	34
(d)-Distribution of respondents based on provocation enduring learning these skills		
	N	%
Fear of public speaking	42	34
Lack of confidence	22	18
Limited vocabulary	28	23
Cultural and language differences	16	13
Difficulty in expressing emotions	14	11
Limited vocabulary + culture and language difference	2	1

The data indicates people's levels of concurrency on the importance of learning communication skills in the contemporary scenario. The table shows that a significant majority of respondents (53%) strongly agree with the importance of these skills. This suggests a majority opinion on the value of communication skills in today's world, which can be perhaps due to the increasing emphasis on collaboration, networking, and information exchange in both professional and personal settings. A significant majority (92%) indicating support for the introduction of a course on communication skills. This suggests a strong consensus among the respondents on the value of such education. Data represents that majority (62%) have tried to learn communication skills; a significant number of people (31%) often consider learning communication skills but haven't taken the steps to do so. A

small percentage (7%) have not tried to learn communication skills. This pie chart advocates that while most people recognize the imperative need of communication skills and have made efforts to improve them, there is still a notable proportion who hesitate to start learning. This could reflect various factors such as lack of time, resources, or confidence (18%). It's an interesting insight into the general attitude towards personal development in communication. Various challenges people face while learning these skills. The most significant challenge highlighted is the "Fear of public speaking (34%)." This suggests that among the skills being learned, public speaking is the one that people find most daunting. The table serves as a representation of the common obstacles encountered in skill acquisition, with public speaking fear standing out as a primary concern for many. (JR. 2022)- communication skill is the pivotal point in skill acquisition of human life in shaping feeling, ideas, emotions, thoughts.it transforms and decodes message for better public understanding with clarity its role is primary in refurbishing relationships, communication complacently affects the whole process of informing, generating, coding decoding, influencing investigating the complete social scenario. (Anvari & Atiyaye 2014) effective communication helps in better comprehending scenario or individuals, develop belief, solve variations, it is considered that effective conversation is pivotal point to succeed in facets of professional and personal life helping to build crystal clear appearance, sound hearing ability, clearness, good body gesture. Effective communication is essential to conquer conversational abilities to build up good relation despite age, gender and background.

Table-7

Distribution of respondents by perspective on communication abilities, recommendations, straight forwardness, and free expression conviction

(a)-Distribution of respondents hinge on their opinion that communication skills become important during college life		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	2	1
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	4	4
Agree	72	58
Strongly agree	46	37
(b)-Distribution of respondents based on their suggestions regarding communication skills		
There should be a curriculum to teach communication skills in schools and colleges	54	44
Public speaking opportunities	36	29
Encourage to participate in group discussions	22	18
Role-playing exercise	4	3
Focus on non- verbal communication and body language	8	6
(c)-Distribution of respondents regarding their		

achievements in life due to communication skills		
Yes	84	68
No	12	10
maybe	28	22
(d)-Distribution of respondents depend on their simple approach while communicating		
Yes	98	79
No	4	3
maybe	22	18
(e)-Distribution of respondents was depend on their belief that they can openly say whatever they think		
Yes	70	56
No	26	21
May be	28	23

A significant majority, 72 respondents, accede that communicative skills are important. 37% respondents strongly believe in the significance of communication skills. 54 respondents suggest implementing a curriculum to teach communication skills. 29% respondents recommend awarding additional golden windows for public speaking. 18% respondents feel encouraging participation in group discussions is beneficial. A small number, 4 respondents, suggest role-playing exercises. 6% respondents emphasize the importance of non-verbal communication and body language. A majority, 68% respondents, believe they have achievements in life due to communication skills. 10% respondents do not attribute their achievements to communication skills. 22% respondents are unsure if their achievements are due to communication skills. 56% respondents endure they can forthrightly speak anything they think. 21% respondents do not endure confidence about forthrightly expressing their thoughts. 23% The table seems to have a minor error in percentages, as 23% is not accounted for with the given numbers. (Mali & Patil, 2023) communication skill includes reporting, writing, responding, mechanics of reading and speaking. Tutee with favorable communication skill have clarity about their ideas and thoughts and build up good relationship with other despite religion or gender, it helps to avoid conflict and builds up trust. (Anggi idwar pratama 2020)- communication is contemplated as social procedure where individuals contrive signs and symbols to interpret various meanings, communication is a skill which teaches an individual to act in an appropriate manner, communication creates active learning ambience for students in order to let them listen and convey, discuss arguments with friends and teachers, it boosts confidence and learning activities among students.

Table- 8

Distribution of respondents hinge on their willingness to acquire new skills, problem-solving approach, and leadership qualities.

(a)-Distribution of respondents depend on their comfort in learning new skills		
	N	%
yes	100	81
No	0	0
maybe	24	19
(b)-Distribution of respondents hinge on their attitudes to solve their problems as		

they arise		
	N	%
Yes	52	42
No	16	13
May be	56	45
(c)-Distribution of respondents who demonstrated leadership qualities		
	N	%
yes	74	60
No	12	9
maybe	38	31

Data reveals that 81% are comfortable learning new skills. More than quarter of respondents 42% are confident in addressing problems as they arise. 13% do not feel confident in addressing problems immediately. 45% are unsure about their ability to address problems, indicating a level of uncertainty. 60% believe they possess leadership qualities. 9% do not think they have leadership qualities. 31% are uncertain about their leadership qualities. It seems that a majority of the respondents are ease with cultivating new skills and feel they have leadership qualities, while there is more uncertainty when it comes to addressing problems as they arise. (Sonnenschein *et al.*, 2020)- communication skill is set of skill which is crucial required to fulfill requirements of workplace of university students. Presentation skill, intercultural and writing skills are considered most important according to students they nodded yes to the approach of learning this set of skills for their workplace development. Few students from university approached that more emphasis should be given on writing, discussion and analysis among this communication skills. (Stamatis 2017) communication is fundamental for globalized modern education, in order to make individuals think effectively, think critically .it develops collaborations and makes individual expert to come out of any worse situation using the power of communication skill in the 21st century educational profile of educationist, students and educational practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The study explores the intricate dynamics of communication skills among undergraduate students, it explores the pivotal roles of having efficient skills of communication like listening, reading, writing, group discussion. Students with better communication ability grab better opportunities for future, communication is like glue for students to be fast learners and be savvy performers academically, in academic environment, students must know themselves, their weaknesses and strength, their environment, friends, teacher, they must be clear for their objective. in-order to balance these aspects a student must have good hold on communication skill, better a student has communication skills, more effectively he will achieve goals and conquer his dreams. Communication skills are considered paramount, they are the connecting source within family members, partners, friends. It fosters team work, better articulation of thoughts and ideas of human within themselves.

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