

# **Communication apprehension and competence and its effect on academic performance**



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# Introduction

- Being an effective communicator is someone who possesses high communication competence and low communication apprehension.
- Previous studies have shown that people who tend to have high communication competence also tend to excel in their academic careers and others who have high communication apprehension tend to struggle more in the same domain (Boohar and Seiler, 1982).
- Studies have shown that relationships also tend to affects a person's communication competence and apprehension (Teven, Richmond and McCroskey, 2010).

# Introduction

- Students experiencing high communication apprehension are at distinct disadvantage when compared to their low or moderate counterparts (Bourhis and Allen, 1992).
- It is also shown the students who show signs of good overall communication habits tend to do fine in an academic setup (Rubin and Graham, 1988).

# Purpose and hypothesis

- The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of why some individuals struggle in school based on their communication skills.
- Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of communication competence will result in higher student GPAs.
- Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of communication apprehension will result in lower student GPAs.

# Method: participants

- Participants: Total number of participants was 35 WLC students.
- WLC students: 20 males and 15 females.
- Average age  $M=20.42$
- Standard deviation:  $SD=.50$
- There was no specific participation requirement.

# Method: instruments

- Instruments: three surveys made up of 64 questions in total.
- The first survey was the "How does communication affect your schooling?" survey.
- I created this survey myself.
- The survey contained 10 questions with a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree".
- The reliability of this survey was tested at .82.
- An example question would be: "You usually get out of your comfort zone to get information you need."

# Method: instruments

- The second survey was the PRCA survey (McCroskey, 1982).
- This survey was made up of 24 questions covering four areas which are group discussion, meetings, interpersonal and public speaking.
- The scale was from 1 to 5 with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree".
- The reliability of the survey was tested at .90.
- An example question would be: "Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable."

# Method: instruments

- The third survey was the "A model of communicative competence survey." (Wiemann, 1977).
- This survey was made up of 29 questions with a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree".
- The reliability of the survey was tested at .91.
- An example question would be: "Usually does not make unusual demands on his/her friends."



# Method: procedures

- Participants received the informed consent before survey.
- Participants then completed all three surveys given to them about communication apprehension and competence.
- Participants then the received debriefing statement at the end.

# Results

- Results showed there wasn't necessarily a direct relationship between communication competence or apprehension and GPA.
- Hypothesis 1 indicated that a person with a higher level of communication competence will result in a higher GPA.
- Results for hypothesis 1 showed that communication competence had little impact on GPA.  $r = .03$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p > .05$

# Results

- Hypothesis 2 indicated that a person with a higher level of communication apprehension will result in a lower GPA.
- Results for hypothesis 2 showed a weak positive relationship between communication apprehension and grades which suggests that as GPA went up, so did communication apprehension.  $r = .13$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p > .05$
- Additional findings however found that there was a positive correlation between positive communication habits and GPA.  $r = .26$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p > .05$

# Discussion

- Communication competence and apprehension do have an impact on students but not necessarily on their academics. Other factors that are more likely to influence GPA are environment, study habits and personal relationships.
- The current study findings did not fully support the previous research.
- A study that was previously conducted showed the relationship of interpersonal communication variables to academic success ( Hawken, Duran and Kelly, 1991).

# Discussions

- It showed that people's personal relationships ultimately had a greater impact on academics than any other variable (Teven, Richmond and McCroskey, 2010).
- We can explain the results of the additional findings by assuming that some people are nervous to do well so their apprehension levels may go up.

# Discussion

- Limitations:
  - Unrepresentative, small sample (only WLC students).
  - Most of the participants were underclassmen, would have liked to have a more mature student base (more juniors and seniors).
  - Some students did not take the survey seriously and were just there for the extra-credit.
- Future research: Would have liked to used random sample and at a bigger educational institution with more participants.

# References

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