

Building Blocks of Success: Communication, Mathematics, and Business Skills of Higher Education Students

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business, communication, higher education, mathematics, regression analysis

Abstract. This descriptive correlational study, utilizing regression analysis, aimed at assessing whether communication and mathematics skills of higher education students enrolled in business courses predict their business abilities. A survey questionnaire, which underwent pilot and reliability testing, served as the primary data gathering instrument. Results revealed that students generally thought well of their communication skills, especially on active listening and group discussions. But they severely lack confidence in public speaking. Students are comfortable in applying their mathematical reasoning to business-related situations; however, they are troubled grasping mathematical ideas and using spreadsheets for financial modelling. Students' confidence in problem-solving, time management, and entrepreneurial activities is higher than their abilities in multitasking and understanding business law and rules. A possible trade-off was indicated by the study's finding of a slight inverse relationship between communication skills and mathematics. Business skills are favorably correlated with both mathematics and communication skills, with mathematics skills having a greater influence. These findings emphasize the necessity for focused development in the areas of business law knowledge, multitasking, public speaking, and understanding mathematical concepts. By strengthening these particular areas, students can acquire a more diverse range of skills, which will ultimately improve their business capabilities and better position them for success in the workplace. In order to promote comprehensive business competence, this study emphasizes the significance of a balanced approach to skills development in higher education.

Introduction

The business world is dynamic and continually evolving, forcing a shift to more flexible management structures to flourish in the face of rapid change (Steiber & Alänge, 2016). Business dynamism is critical to both economic growth and market reform (Virglerová et al., 2020) emphasizing the need for current management ideas that are compatible with today's dynamic corporate environment (Mihajlovic et al., 2022). To stay ahead of competitors, firms must be able to foresee and respond to changing business opportunities and risks, stressing the need of strategic alterations in structure and systems (Ettrich & Andersen, 2021).

As a result, business-related courses, such as the BS in Office Administration, BS in Business Administration and BS in Entrepreneurship have become essential in preparing students for a wide range of administrative, business and entrepreneurial tasks across industries in order to handle changing landscapes. Fundamental communication, mathematics, and business abilities are required for this preparation. Effective communication skills are essential for fostering teamwork, clearly articulating ideas, and building solid professional relationships (Maroof et al., 2023). Similarly, mathematics ability is increasingly recognized as essential for analytical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making in the workplace (Fox, 2017). These abilities complement the skills required of office administration workers, business managers and entrepreneurs, determining their readiness for real-world problems and issues.

The CHED Memorandum Order No. 19, Series of 2017; CMO 17, Series of 2017 and CMO 18, Series of 2017 provide the regulatory framework for the offering of the BS in Office Administration, BS in Business Administration and BS in

Entrepreneurship programs in the Philippines, respectively. This memorandum orders outline the curriculum framework, objectives, admission requirements, program structure, and other pertinent guidelines for institutions offering these programs (CHED, 2018; CHED 2017). These documents serve as the foundational policy ensuring that educational institutions align their offerings with industry needs and standards, thereby equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in administrative, business and entrepreneurship roles. These relevant CMOs also emphasize the importance of communication, mathematical, and business skills in the said programs.

Despite the acknowledged relevance of communication and mathematics skills, there is still a lack of understanding about how these competencies predict and influence broader business competency among higher education students studying office administration, business administration, and entrepreneurship. Existing researches frequently overlook the unique interplay between these core skills and their distinctive impact on business capabilities in the educational context.

The research uses known theoretical frameworks, such as the Human Capital Theory, to guide its inquiry. According to this viewpoint (Becker, 2009), investments in communication and mathematics abilities are key components of a person's human capital. These abilities are viewed as increasing productivity and career success by providing students the necessary tools for business competency. Furthermore, according to the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), communication and mathematical skills are internal resources that contribute to competitive advantage. In this context, these qualities are essential for improving organizational capacities and performance in administrative tasks.

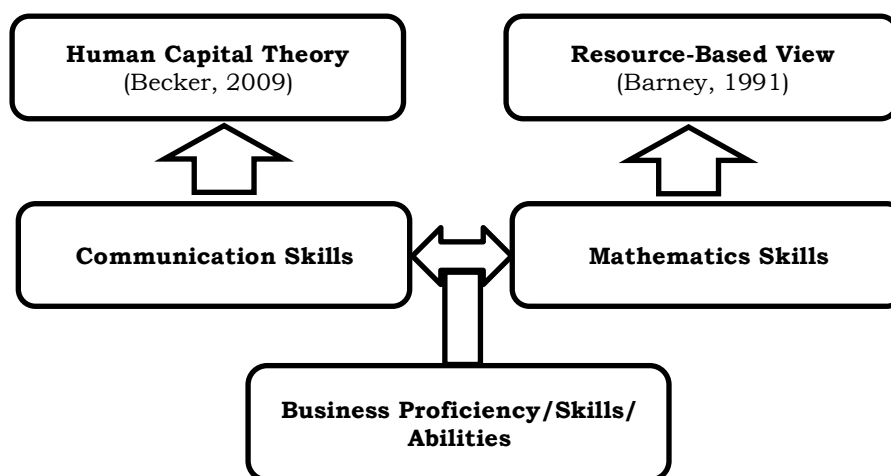


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

By investigating the connections between communication, mathematics, and business abilities among students, this study aims to provide useful insights into educational practices that encourage holistic skill development. The findings are intended to inform adjustments to the curriculum designed to develop well-rounded workers capable of meeting the changing needs of modern workplaces. Finally, this study helps to advance our understanding of how core skills transition into business proficiency, which supports educational methods that correspond with industry needs and improve workforce readiness.

It specifically worked on the following objectives:

1. Determine the communication, mathematics and business skills of higher education students;
2. Assess the correlations between communication, mathematics and business skills; and
3. Investigate whether communication and mathematics skills/abilities predict business skills of students.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational methodology to look into the correlations between communication, mathematics, and business skills in higher education students. The major goal was to examine whether communication and mathematical skills may predict business proficiency. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the data and determine the predictive power of these skills.

The study was carried out at Quirino State University, an established higher education institution noted for its numerous academic offerings. The university's diverse business-related courses and large population of higher education students enrolled in relevant programs make it an ideal setting for this research.

The study focused on students pursuing a BSOA, BSBA and BS Entrepreneurship degree. These students were chosen because they are expected to have various degrees of communication, mathematics, and business skills that are relevant to the study's goals. A simple random sampling procedure was used to ensure that each student in the target population had an equal chance of being chosen. The sample size was calculated using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. The sample procedure and specifications ensured that the findings were reliable and generalizable.

From the sample of 258 students, majority of them are female, have an average age of 20.9 and are enrolled in the Office Administration course.

Demographics		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	84	32.56
	Female	174	67.44
Age Mean: 20.9	18-19	69	26.75
	20-21	119	46.12
	22-23	44	17.05
	24 and above	26	10.08
Course	BSOA	121	46.90
	BSBA	64	24.81
	BSE Entrep	73	28.29
Total		258	100.00

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The primary data gathering tool was a self-created survey questionnaire that was pilot tested to guarantee clarity and effectiveness. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire items, guaranteeing that each scale has an adequate level of internal consistency. The results are: 0.763 (Communication Skills), 0.858 (Mathematics Skills) and 0.803 (Business Skills).

Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms. This strategy enabled efficient data collection. The online survey was disseminated to a selected sample of students, and responses were electronically gathered and archived for further analysis. Data analysis included descriptive statistics that outlined respondents' demographic characteristics and affirms to survey items. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the correlations between communication skills, mathematical abilities, and business competency. The investigation assisted in determining whether communication and mathematical skills significantly predict business competency, as well as the magnitude of their predictive ability.

Results and Discussion

Assessments of students' business, mathematics, and communication skills in higher education offer important information about how well-prepared they are for both academic and professional success. Significant findings of this study are detailed in the following discussions.

	Communication Skills	SD	Mean	Description
1.	I am confident in my ability to express ideas clearly in writing.	0.687	3.17	Agree
2.	I feel comfortable speaking in front of an audience.	0.475	2.23	Disagree
3.	I find it easy to understand complex written information.	0.708	3.21	Agree
4.	I enjoy participating in group discussions and teamwork.	0.552	3.70	Strongly Agree
5.	I feel confident in my ability to listen actively and attentively.	0.655	3.46	Agree
6.	I think I can adapt my communication style to different audiences.	0.691	2.87	Agree
7.	I am skilled at using communication technologies (e.g., email, video calls) effectively.	0.676	2.90	Agree

	Communication Skills	SD	Mean	Description
8.	I believe improving my communication skills will enhance my career prospects.	0.851	3.34	Agree
9.	I feel confident in my ability to negotiate and persuade others.	0.650	2.65	Agree
10.	I find it easy to convey technical information to non-technical audiences.	0.542	2.80	Agree
11.	I enjoy preparing and delivering presentations.	0.594	2.75	Agree
12.	I am skilled at building and maintaining professional relationships.	0.557	2.84	Agree
13.	I feel comfortable handling inquiries and complaints.	0.568	2.80	Agree
	Grand Mean	0.737	2.98	Agree
<i>Legend:</i> 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA) 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree (D) 2.50 – 3.49 Agree (A) 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree (SD)				

Table 2. Communication Skills of Students

The general mean suggests that students have generally favorable view about their communication skills. When particular items were examined, students' greatest degree of agreement (Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.552) was found for the statement, "I enjoy participating in group discussions and teamwork," demonstrating their strong sense of confidence and satisfaction in situations involving collaborative communication. Students also showed a high degree of confidence in their capacity to actively and carefully listen (Mean = 3.46, SD = 0.655) and in their conviction that developing their communication skills will improve their chances of landing a job (Mean = 3.34, SD = 0.851).

Respondents are typically secure in their ability to communicate, especially when participating in group discussions and active listening. However, there is a noticeable lack of confidence when it comes to public speaking. This suggests a possible area for focused improvement to guarantee a comprehensive development of their communication skills.

Results are similar to the study of (Vo, 2020) that listening skills to objects of communication was evaluated to be high among Vietnamese higher education students. Expectedly, students in higher education need to be proficient in communication as this could affect both their academic performance and future employment opportunities. Various studies have emphasized the importance of cultivating communicative self-efficacy in college students, highlighting its function in successful interpersonal exchanges (Iasechko et al., 2024).

	Mathematics Skills	SD	Mean	Description
1.	I enjoy solving mathematical problems.	0.599	2.32	Disagree
2.	I find mathematical concepts easy to grasp.	0.602	2.43	Disagree
3.	I enjoy working with numbers and data analysis.	0.625	2.50	Agree
4.	I feel comfortable using mathematical software/tools (e.g., Excel, statistical software).	0.612	2.53	Agree
5.	I am skilled in understanding statistics in interpreting business trends.	0.587	2.50	Agree
6.	I am proficient in using financial mathematics (e.g., calculating interest rates, analyzing investment returns).	0.595	2.74	Agree
7.	I can use data visualizations in presenting numerical information effectively.	0.560	2.75	Agree
8.	I am knowledgeable about budgeting and financial planning which are crucial for business management.	0.529	2.84	Agree
9.	I am skilled at using spreadsheets for data analysis and financial modeling.	0.338	2.12	Disagree
10.	I enjoy applying mathematical reasoning to solve business problems.	0.544	2.75	Agree
11.	I feel comfortable analyzing numerical data to support decision-making.	0.516	2.85	Agree
12.	I am confident about my quantitative analysis skills which could be essential for business strategy development.	0.329	2.11	Disagree
	Grand Mean	0.598	2.54	Agree

Table 3. Mathematics Skills of Students

Students generally agree that using mathematical reasoning to solve business challenges is enjoyable (mean = 2.75), and they feel comfortable assessing numerical data to help with decision-making. Additionally, students' mean scores for

financial planning and budgeting knowledge were 2.84 and 2.74, respectively, for financial mathematics ability (calculating interest rates, assessing investment returns, etc.). There is disagreement about whether or not students find it easy to understand mathematical concepts (mean = 2.43) and whether or not they enjoy solving mathematical problems (mean = 2.32). Students (mean = 2.12) surprisingly disagreed about using spreadsheets for data analysis and financial modeling.

Overall, the findings imply that although students may find it difficult to understand math concepts, they believe they are capable of applying mathematics to business environments.

A number of factors, including perceptions of instructional effectiveness, computation skills, metacognitive abilities, critical thinking capacities, and knowledge economy competencies, affect college students' mathematical proficiency. Research indicates that there is a strong relationship between students' engagement in mathematics and teachers' perceived effectiveness (Torrejos, 2024). Additionally, students' performance in mathematics courses can be greatly improved by developing their research skills, which include computation, critical thinking, and metacognition (Baraquia, 2024).

	Business Skills	SD	Mean	Description
1.	I understand basic business concepts (e.g., marketing, finance).	0.582	3.58	Strongly Agree
2.	I have good problem-solving skills which are crucial in business environments.	0.538	2.85	Agree
3.	I feel confident in my ability to analyze business problems and propose solutions.	0.509	2.88	Agree
4.	I enjoy learning about different business strategies and models.	0.501	3.10	Agree
5.	I enjoy participating in entrepreneurial activities and competitions.	0.525	2.93	Agree
6.	I am adaptable and resilient which are important qualities for business professionals.	0.481	2.95	Agree
7.	I have knowledge on business law and regulations.	0.572	2.46	Disagree
8.	I feel confident in organizing and maintaining office records and files.	0.531	2.96	Agree
9.	I have good time management skills which are crucial for efficient office operations.	0.532	2.97	Agree
10.	I can do multitasking which is essential for managing office tasks effectively.	0.539	2.27	Disagree
11.	I am comfortable using office equipment such as printers, scanners, and fax machines.	0.547	2.99	Agree
12.	I enjoy coordinating meetings and managing schedules.	0.448	2.96	Agree
	Grand Mean	0.608	2.91	Agree

Table 4. Business skills of Students

Students expressed confidence in their aptitude for problem-solving (mean = 2.85), business problem-analysis (mean = 2.88), time management (mean = 2.97), and office equipment utilization (mean = 2.99). Additionally, they expressed enthusiasm for both taking part in entrepreneurial activities (mean = 2.93) and learning about different business methods (mean = 3.10). However, they also conveyed low confidence in their ability to multitask (mean = 2.27) and in their understanding of business law and regulations (mean = 2.46).

According to the survey, students generally have a favorable attitude toward business and have a basic understanding of it. They might, however, need to hone their multitasking skills and solidify their fundamental understanding of business law and regulations.

College students frequently struggle to improve their business writing abilities for a variety of reasons, including a small vocabulary, poor grammar knowledge, a lack of practice, and outdated instructional strategies (Mathumathi et al., 2024; Shruthi et al., 2024). College student entrepreneurs demonstrate traits like accountability, determination, and cooperation when it comes to entrepreneurship, all of which are necessary for success in the entrepreneurial journey (Peng & Lyu, 2024). College students will be better prepared for success in the business world if they address these issues and concentrate on honing critical abilities.

Skills		Communication Skills	Mathematics Skills
Mathematics Skills	Pearson's r	-0.130*	—
	p-value	0.037	—
Business Skills	Pearson's r	0.192**	0.307***
	p-value	0.002	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5. Correlation between Communication, Mathematics and Business Skills of Higher Education Students

Important data regarding the relationships between communication, math, and business skills among college students may be gained from the findings in Table 5. Mathematics and communication skills have a weak but statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.130$, $p = 0.037$), indicating a little trade-off between these capabilities.

On the other hand, business skills and proficiency in mathematics and communication are positively correlated. Mathematics skills have a substantial positive correlation ($r = 0.307$, $p < 0.001$) with business skills, whereas communication skills show a moderately strong connection ($r = 0.192$, $p = 0.002$). This suggests that students with excellent communication skills also tend to do better in business environments, and that students who excel in mathematics are likely to have greater business skills.

Overall, these findings demonstrate how important it is for students to improve their communication and quantitative skills in order to enhance their business skills in higher education. It is clear that the development of mathematical abilities has a bigger impact on business skills; that being said, communication skills are also very important for enhancing business competence. The inverse relationship between communication and mathematics skills further demonstrates the need for well-balanced techniques that minimize any potential compromises in efforts to improve these skills.

In the business world, communication and mathematical abilities are essential. In mathematics, problem -solving, reflection, reasoning, and connections are all greatly aided by mathematical communication (Hoiriyah, 2017). Additionally, in the field of business English, speaking skills instruction has grown in significance in order to provide students with the rhetorical tools they need to negotiate successfully in a complex global economic environment (Horea & Abrudan, 2022).

In this case, the role of teachers in the classroom seem crucial; they are expected to do more than what the profession and classroom demand, utilizing their wealth of expertise and abilities in the classroom (Nolasco, 2021).

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Overall Model Test		
					df1	f2	p
Business Skills	0.386	0.149	0.142	22.3	2	255	<0.001

Table 6. Model Fit Measures

The model fit measures are shown in Table 6, where the moderate relationship between the observed and predicted values of business skills is shown by a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.386. The combined effect of mathematical and communication skills can explain around 14.9% of the variance in business skills, according to the R^2 value of 0.149. This result is supported by the modified R^2 value of 0.142, which provides a somewhat more cautious assessment of the model's explanatory power and takes the number of predictors into consideration. The model as a whole fits the data well, as seen by the highly significant overall model test ($F = 22.3$, $p < 0.001$).

Predictors	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	1.522	0.2168	7.02	< .001
Communication Skills	0.215	0.0530	4.06	< .001
Mathematics Skills	0.294	0.0507	5.80	< .001

Table 7. Model Coefficients – Business Skills

The results of the study, as presented in Tables 6 and 7, provide valuable insights into the relationship between business skills and the predictors of communication and mathematics skills.

The intercept is 1.522, indicating that the predicted value of business skills is 1.522 when both the mathematical and communication abilities are at zero. Business skills improve by 0.215 units for every unit increase in communication skills (Estimate = 0.215, SE = 0.0530, $t = 4.06$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that communication skills have a considerable beneficial impact on business skills. Comparably, business skills are positively correlated with mathematical skills (Estimate = 0.294, SE = 0.0507, $t = 5.80$, $p < 0.001$), with a 0.294 unit increase in business skills for every unit gain in mathematics skills. These results demonstrate how crucial it is for respondents to improve their business skills to have strong communication and mathematical abilities.

In a similar study (Opstad, 2024), it was found out that attitudes towards mathematics significantly explain success in business mathematics. Tanveer et al. (2015) revealed that business students are unlikely to succeed in topics like finance, accounting, and marketing without having any competence in mathematics. Additionally, findings of the study of (Kalogiannidis et al., 2023), indicate the beneficial impact internal corporate communication can have on an organization's capacity to survive unpredictable times.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that most students think well of their communication abilities, particularly when they participate in group discussions and active listening and show a lot of confidence in their abilities. But there was a noticeable lack of confidence when it comes to public speaking, which suggests an obvious area that has to be improved. Students felt they can use mathematical reasoning in business contexts and feel at ease analyzing numerical data to make decisions when it comes to their mathematical skills. However, they have trouble grasping mathematical ideas and utilizing spreadsheets for financial modeling, which emphasizes the need for more assistance in these areas.

In the areas of problem-solving, time management, and entrepreneurship, students demonstrate confidence in their business skills. They show less confidence, though, when it comes to multitasking and understanding business laws and regulations, which suggests that they need targeted training in these areas to improve their general business competency. A possible trade-off between these talents is indicated by the weak negative relationship between communication and mathematics skills found in the study. Despite this, there is a favorable correlation between business abilities and both mathematics and communication skills, with the latter having a stronger effect. This research emphasizes how crucial it is to develop communication and mathematics skills in a balanced way in order to improve business competencies.

All things considered, the findings show how much practice is needed in the areas of public speaking, understanding mathematical concepts, multitasking, and business law. Teachers can help students acquire a well-rounded skill set that will improve their business capacities and better position them for success in the workplace by focusing on these particular areas.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be may available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.