

The Role of Effective Communication Skills in the Work Readiness Experience of PAP UNJ Students

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the role of effective communication skills in the work readiness experience of students in the Office Administration Education Study Program (PAP) of the State University of Jakarta (UNJ). Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis from final semester students and/or those with internship experience. The results of the study indicate that mastery of oral, written, active listening, and non-verbal communication significantly contributes to students' work readiness. Oral communication is crucial for professional interactions, while written communication is essential for the accuracy of administrative documents. Active listening and empathy skills support understanding instructions and building relationships. Furthermore, overall communication competency increases students' self-confidence and adaptability in the work environment. The implications of these findings emphasize the need for the UNJ PAP Study Program to strengthen the curriculum and learning practices that focus on developing holistic communication skills through real-world simulations and constructive feedback, in order to produce graduates who are not only technically competent but also resilient and adaptive.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Work Readiness, Office Administration Education.

Introduction

Today's modern world requires individuals to possess more than just technical skills. In this fast-paced and competitive era, the ability to interact, negotiate and convey ideas clearly has become crucial in various aspects of life, especially in the professional realm. Effective communication is a key foundation for successful collaboration, innovation and sound decision-making in the work environment (Rahardjo & Nurhayati, 2020). Without adequate communication, the potential for misunderstandings, conflicts, and obstacles in achieving organizational goals can increase significantly. Therefore, investing in the development of communication skills is a priority for individuals and institutions that want to achieve long-term success.

In a more specific context, higher education institutions play a vital role in preparing their graduates to face the challenges of the world of work. Studies conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) consistently show that communication skills, both oral and written, top the list of attributes most sought after by employers from new graduates (NACE, 2021). This indicates a paradigm shift in the world of work, where the value of an individual is not only measured by his or her mastery of scientific disciplines, but also by his or her ability to interact and adapt in a dynamic professional environment. Universities have a responsibility to equip their students with communication skills that, alongside technical knowledge, will give graduates a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the development of effective communication skills is becoming increasingly urgent given the complexity of challenges in the contemporary world of work. Today's work environment is characterized by cross-functional collaboration, cultural diversity, and intensive use of technology, all of which demand adaptive and nuanced communication abilities (Ramadhanti & Nurhayati, 2021). For example, the ability to

give persuasive presentations, write concise and clear reports, listen actively, and negotiate ethically, are essential skills that enable individuals to stand out and make real contributions. Therefore, educational institutions can no longer just focus on knowledge transfer, but must proactively integrate strategies to improve their students' communication competencies. This includes not only the teaching of theory, but also practical opportunities and ongoing constructive feedback.

The phenomenon of work readiness, which is the level of individual readiness to enter and succeed in the work environment (Sari & Wulandari, 2020), is strongly influenced by the mastery of communication skills. Work readiness includes not only technical knowledge and skills relevant to the field of study, but also psychological, social, and interpersonal aspects that enable individuals to adapt, interact effectively, and contribute positively in the workplace. Students who have strong communication skills tend to be more confident in job interviews, adapt more easily to corporate culture, and build professional networks faster (Pratama & Lestari, 2022). Conversely, deficiencies in communication aspects can be a significant barrier for graduates, making them less competitive in the recruitment process and less effective in their roles once hired. Therefore, preparing students to be work-ready cannot be separated from systematic efforts to strengthen their communication capacity. Educational programs that integrate interview simulations, group projects, and public presentations can be an effective means to achieve this goal.

Specifically, this study will focus on the important role of effective communication skills in the work readiness experience of students of the Office Administration Education Study Program (PAP) at the State University of Jakarta (UNJ). UNJ's PAP Study Program, as one of the leading vocational education institutions in Indonesia, has a mandate to produce graduates who not only master office administration, but are also ready to face the demands of work in the digital era. Professions in office administration inherently require intensive interaction with various parties, both internal and external to the organization (Astuti & Wibowo, 2019). The ability to compose official letters, manage electronic correspondence, communicate with clients and coworkers, and present information accurately and efficiently, are the core competencies of an office administration professional (Widodo & Putra, 2021). Given the nature of their work which relies heavily on communication, UNJ PAP students have a unique and urgent need to develop superior communication skills in order to compete and succeed in their careers. Therefore, this study aims to analyze in depth how the mastery of effective communication skills contributes to the level of work readiness of PAP UNJ students. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for curriculum development and learning strategies in the PAP UNJ Study Program, as well as a reference for other vocational education institutions in an effort to improve the relevance of graduates to the needs of the world of work.

Methods

This research adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides flexibility for researchers to explore phenomena in depth and comprehensively, understanding participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations regarding the role of effective communication skills in their work readiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design allows intensive exploration of phenomena in a real-world context, namely the work readiness experiences of students in the Office Administration Education Study Program (PAP) at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) (Yin, 2018). This focus on one specific group helps in building a rich and contextualized understanding of the issue under study. The participants in this study were active students of the UNJ PAP Study Program who were in semester 6 and/or had internship experience. The selection of this group is based on the assumption that students in semester 6 have received most of the lecture material and have a more mature understanding of the demands of the world of work, while internship experience provides a practical perspective on the application of communication skills. The participant selection process was conducted through purposive sampling, which is a sampling technique based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015).

Result and Discussion

The Crucial Role of Verbal Communication in Professional Interactions

Research findings consistently highlighted the importance of oral communication skills as a key foundation of UNJ PAP students' work readiness. The majority of participants revealed that the ability to speak clearly, straightforwardly and confidently is an invaluable asset, especially in formal situations such as job interviews, presentations and team discussions. Students who had completed internships particularly emphasized that effective oral communication was crucial to their success in interacting with supervisors, colleagues and clients.

One participant stated, "During my internship, I really realized that speaking is not just sound. It must be structured, clear, and adjusted to the person you are speaking to. For example, during a presentation of work results, if you talk all over the place, the audience will be confused. This is a skill that is very useful when briefing with superiors or explaining something to clients." This confession corroborates Klaus' (2010) view that places oral communication as one of the top skills sought by employers. The ability to articulate ideas and information persuasively is not just about getting a message across, but also about establishing credibility and influencing others, which is highly relevant in the modern office environment (Robles, 2012).

Observations in the campus environment also corroborate these findings. Students who are actively involved in class discussions, are able to present individual or group assignments in a logical flow, and dare to ask questions or give constructive responses, tend to show higher self-confidence. They seem more prepared to face situations that require verbal improvisation. However, on the other hand, there are still some students who show anxiety or difficulty in expressing their ideas verbally in public or in large groups. This suggests that although the UNJ PAP Study Program has integrated a presentation or discussion component in some courses, the intensity and frequency of practice and structured feedback may need to be increased. Strengthening public speaking skills, active participation in simulated meetings, and training in oral job interview techniques are areas that could be strengthened in the curriculum or through supporting activities. This concept of effective oral communication is in line with the views of Robles (2012) who emphasizes that managers and employers highly value verbal communication skills as a key indicator of success in the workplace.

The Importance of Structured and Clear Written Communication

In addition to verbal communication, this research clearly identifies written communication skills as a core competency that must be mastered by graduates of UNJ's PAP Study Program. The role of an administrative professional is closely related to the production and management of written documents, which demand accuracy, clarity, precision of format, and the use of standardized language. This includes writing official letters, memos, reports, meeting minutes, professional emails, and database management. Small errors in writing can have a major impact on the professional image and operational efficiency of an organization.

The participant explained, "I used to think that writing an email was easy, just send it. But when I got the correspondence material, I found out that there are formats, language, and ethics that must be obeyed. This is really important if you want to work, because email is our first representation to other people in the office." This view is supported by Astuti and Wibowo (2019) who emphasize that competence in composing neat and communicative office documents is a prerequisite for office administration graduates. Good writing skills include not only correct grammar and spelling, but also the ability to organize information logically, concisely, and easily understood by readers.

Document analysis in the form of practicum reports, correspondence assignments, and even participants' curriculum vitae showed variations in writing quality. Students who demonstrated high writing quality tended to use proper grammar and spelling, construct effective sentences, and organize ideas logically and coherently. They also showed a good understanding of the format and writing style appropriate for different types of office documents. On the other hand, some documents still showed weaknesses in paragraph structure, coherence, and proper use of technical administrative terms. This indicates that although correspondence and archival courses have been taught, repeated practical writing exercises and detailed feedback are still urgently needed. The UNJ PAP Study Program could consider increasing the number of simulations of writing real documents used in offices, such as producing accurate meeting minutes, preparing

simple financial reports, or writing press releases, so that students become accustomed to the demands of accuracy and speed in professional writing. The role of qualified writing skills is in line with the findings of Astuti and Wibowo (2019) which state that expertise in managing and compiling office documents is an essential competency of office administration graduates in the modern era.

Active Listening Skills and Empathy in Social Interaction

The study also found that active listening skills play a significant role in students' work readiness, although it is often less recognized than speaking or writing. Participants who had internship experience explicitly mentioned the importance of listening carefully to instructions from superiors, feedback from supervisors, or needs from clients.

One participant shared, "During my internship, I learned a lot from listening. For example, when the supervisor gives instructions, if we don't focus on listening, we can make mistakes in doing the tasks. Then, when there are complaints from clients, if we can listen carefully and empathetically, they will feel more appreciated and the problem can be resolved quickly." This view is consistent with the literature stating that active listening is a vital component of effective interpersonal communication, allowing individuals to understand others' perspectives, reduce misunderstandings, and build strong relationships (Ramadhanti & Nurhayati, 2021). This skill is also closely related to empathy, the ability to understand and feel what others are experiencing, which is essential in building teamwork and resolving conflict.

Classroom observations show that students who are able to listen actively tend to grasp lecture material faster, ask more relevant questions, and are more able to collaborate effectively in group tasks. They tend to be discussion facilitators and are able to synthesize information from various sources. However, there is still a tendency among some students to be distracted or unfocused while listening, which can hinder their understanding of instructions or important information. Therefore, there needs to be a more explicit emphasis in the curriculum on practicing active listening skills, perhaps through case studies, role-play simulations, or feedback exercises. Empathy development can also be integrated through discussions of professional ethics and case studies involving interpersonal dilemmas in the workplace. The importance of active listening and empathy is reinforced by Ramadhanti and Nurhayati (2021) who state that these two skills are essential for building strong professional relationships and resolving conflicts in complex work environments.

The Effect of Communication Skills on Self-Confidence and Work Adaptation

The most interesting finding is the relationship between the mastery of effective communication skills and the level of confidence and adaptability of students in the work environment. Students who feel they have good communication competence tend to be more confident in facing job interviews, dare to take initiatives, and adapt more quickly to the company culture. Participant revealed, "I used to be insecure when told to speak in public or during interviews. But after participating in communication training and often practicing presentations on campus, I became more confident. This really helped me when I applied for an internship, I was more courageous in answering questions and showing my potential." This statement supports Pratama and Lestari's research (2022) which found a positive correlation between communication skills and work readiness, where confidence is one of the mediating factors. The confidence that comes from communication skills allows individuals to show their best potential, even in stressful situations such as the recruitment process.

In addition, effective communication also facilitates students' adaptation process in the new work environment. The ability to ask questions, seek clarification, provide feedback, and interact positively with coworkers helps students more quickly understand workflows, company norms, and build professional relationships. This is in line with the concept of work readiness which includes not only technical aspects, but also adaptability and interpersonal skills (Sari & Wulandari, 2020). Students who have difficulty communicating tend to feel isolated, hesitant in asking questions, and potentially experience misunderstandings that hinder their adaptation process. Therefore, the development of communication skills should be seen as a crucial investment in shaping resilient and adaptive graduates.

Implications for UNJ Office Administration Education Curriculum

The results of this study have significant implications for the curriculum development of the UNJ PAP Study Program. Although communication skills have been taught in several courses, there is still a need to integrate communication teaching and practice in a more holistic and structured manner. Some students suggested more workplace simulations, team-based projects, and individual presentations that receive regular constructive feedback.

For example, a participant suggested, "Maybe in certain courses, in addition to theoretical assignments, there can be simulation assignments of real work scenarios. For example, how to respond to complaint emails from clients, or how to negotiate with vendors. So we don't just know the theory, but directly practice." This proposal is in line with recommendations from NACE (2021) which emphasize the importance of practical experience in developing soft skills. The UNJ PAP Study Program could consider increasing practical courses that require students to engage in public presentations, debates, or group projects that require intensive coordination and communication.

First, strengthening courses that focus on practical communication. This can include increasing the weight of practice in courses such as Business Correspondence, Professional Ethics, or Office Communication. Expanding the scope of the material to include simulations of writing professional emails, internal memos, complex meeting minutes, and other administrative documents that require high accuracy. In addition, the use of English in correspondence is also increasingly relevant considering that many multinational companies operate in Indonesia.

Second, increasing the frequency and quality of oral communication exercises. UNJ PAP students need to be given more opportunities to do individual presentations, simulated briefings, or role-play situations of receiving guests/clients, with detailed and constructive feedback from lecturers. Lecturer involvement in providing peer-to-peer feedback can also encourage active learning. Also consider having practical courses that specifically train public speaking or negotiation in an administrative context.

Third, integrating active listening skills and non-verbal communication. This can be done through in-depth case studies on conflict resolution or customer service, where students are trained to listen empathetically and respond with appropriate body language. Workshops on professional ethics, image management, and building rapport with colleagues or superiors would be very useful.

Fourth, increase collaborative and team-based projects. Such projects will force students to communicate effectively in groups, solve problems together, and coordinate in the division of tasks. This will also train them in dealing with interpersonal dynamics that often occur in real work environments.

Fifth, invite industry practitioners. Study programs can routinely invite practitioners from various industries (banking, manufacturing, service, etc.) to share experiences on the importance of communication in the administrative profession. They can also provide direct insight into the expectations of the workplace on graduates' communication skills.

Sixth, utilization of technology. Given the rapid development of information technology, the curriculum needs to include learning about ethics and effectiveness of communication through digital platforms (e.g., video conferencing, professional chat groups, project management tools). Students must be taught how to communicate professionally in an online context, which is increasingly common in the modern workplace.

Conclusions

This study comprehensively confirms that effective communication skills play a central and inseparable role in the work readiness experience of students in the Office Administration Education Study Program (PAP) of the State University of Jakarta (UNJ). The findings show that mastery of oral communication, written communication, active listening, and non-verbal communication significantly affects students' self-confidence, their ability to adapt to the work environment, and their effectiveness in carrying out administrative tasks.

Specifically, oral communication is the foundation for effective professional interactions, allowing students to convey information clearly, confidently, and persuasively in interviews, presentations, and team coordination. Written communication is crucial for professionalism and accuracy, given the high demands of the administrative profession on the preparation of various formal documents that are structured and error-free. Furthermore, active listening and empathy skills have been shown to be essential for understanding instructions, responding to the needs of colleagues or clients, and building strong working relationships, which are especially relevant in administrative support and service roles. Equally important, non-verbal communication also shapes the perception of professionalism and student readiness in the eyes of employers.

The integration of all these communication aspects cumulatively increases students' self-confidence, making them more proactive in seeking opportunities and facing challenges in the workplace. In addition, strong communication skills directly contribute to faster adaptation to the culture and dynamics of the new work environment, allowing students to interact effectively and become productive team members.

The implications of this study are very relevant to the UNJ PAP Study Program. To ensure graduates who are truly ready to work, the curriculum needs to be strengthened with more applied communication practices through simulations of real-world work scenarios, collaborative projects, and constructive feedback. Increasing the frequency of oral communication exercises, writing professional documents, and integrating active listening and non-verbal communication training will equip students with crucial soft skills. Collaboration with industry practitioners and the use of the latest communication technology are also vital in preparing students to face the demands of modern office administration.

Thus, the focus on developing holistic communication skills is no longer just a complement, but a strategic investment for the UNJ Office Administration Education Study Program to produce graduates who are not only superior in administrative hard skills, but also resilient, adaptive, and ready to compete in a competitive job market.

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