

ISSN: 3057-1081 (Online)

Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 25–45

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September–December 2025

Received: 11.10.25 / Revised: 07.12.25 / Accepted: 15.12.25

A Preliminary Investigation of Communication Skills Workshop Impact on Pre-Service Early Childhood Educators: Evidence from a Single-Group Study

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Abstract

This preliminary investigation examined the impact of a seminar-workshop on enhancing the self-reported communication skills of future early childhood educators across three domains: interactions with children, parents, and colleagues. Using a single-group pre-test/post-test design, 40 undergraduate Early Childhood Education students participated in a structured professional development intervention incorporating experiential learning activities, role-playing exercises, and collaborative discussions. While acknowledging significant methodological limitations, including the absence of a control group and exclusive reliance on self-report measures, the results demonstrated statistically significant improvements across all domains with large effect sizes: child interactions ($d = 1.89, p < 0.001$), parent interactions ($d = 1.96, p < 0.001$), and colleague interactions ($d = 2.14, p < 0.001$). Post-workshop evaluations indicated high participant satisfaction and perceived professional benefit. These findings provided preliminary evidence suggesting the potential value of structured communication skills training in early childhood education programs, while highlighting the critical need for more rigorous experimental designs to establish definitive effectiveness. The research serves as an important foundation for future controlled studies examining communication skills development in pre-service educator preparation.

Keywords: Communication skills, Early childhood education, Pre-service teachers, Professional development

Introduction

Effective communication serves as a foundation for successful early childhood education, fundamentally determining educators' capacity to nurture positive relationships with children, engage families meaningfully, and collaborate productively with colleagues (Nurani et al., 2019). The complexity of communication in early childhood settings demands sophisticated skill sets that extend beyond basic interpersonal abilities to include developmentally appropriate verbal and non-verbal strategies, cultural responsiveness, and adaptive communication approaches tailored to diverse audiences and contexts (Aziz et al., 2024).

Research consistently demonstrates strong associations between educator communication competence and positive educational outcomes across multiple domains. Teachers with refined communication skills create more supportive classroom environments, facilitate stronger parent-teacher partnerships that enhance children's developmental trajectories, and contribute to more effective professional learning communities within their institutions (Hamm & Mousseau, 2023; Cash & Pianta, 2023). The ripple effects of enhanced communication extend beyond immediate interactions, influencing overall program quality, family satisfaction, and collaborative professional culture.

However, many pre-service educators reported feeling inadequately prepared for the complex communication demands they would encounter in professional practice. Common concerns include uncertainty about handling sensitive conversations with parents, addressing challenging behavioral situations with children using appropriate communication strategies, and establishing effective collaborative relationships with colleagues from various professional backgrounds (Robingatin et al., 2022). These preparation gaps suggest a critical need for targeted professional development interventions that systematically develop communication competencies before educators enter the field.

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of communication skills in early childhood education, empirical research examining the effectiveness of targeted professional development interventions remains limited. Most existing studies focus on general professional development outcomes or measure broad teaching effectiveness rather than systematically assessing specific communication skill improvements through rigorous pre-test/post-test comparisons. In addition, few investigations have explored how pre-service educators perceive the impact of structured communication training on their professional preparation and confidence.

Objectives

1. To assess pre-service early childhood educators communication skills in three domains: communication with children, parents, and colleagues.
2. To examine changes in communication skills following participation in a communication-skills workshop.
3. To evaluate the practical significance of any improvements in communication skills.
4. To explore participants perceptions of the workshop's relevance and value for professional development.
5. To provide preliminary evidence to guide future research and program development in pre-service communication training.

Hypotheses

This preliminary investigation tests two primary hypotheses within the constraints of a single-group research design. H1 proposes that participants will report statistically significant improvements in self-reported communication skills following workshop participation, measured across three domains: H1a, interactions with children; H1b, interactions with parents; and H1c, interactions with colleagues. H2 suggests that participants will perceive the workshop as positively impacting their professional development, reporting high levels of satisfaction and anticipated future application of the acquired communication skills.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations for Communication Skills Development

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding how adults develop complex professional competencies, such as communication skills, through structured, reflective experiences. The theory's four-stage cycle, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, aligns particularly well with communication skill development, which requires integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application and ongoing refinement based on feedback and reflection. Research across various educational contexts has demonstrated ELT's effectiveness in promoting both skill acquisition and retention, particularly when learners engage authentically with all four stages of the learning cycle (Miller et al., 2020).

In language learning and communication development contexts specifically, ELT has shown promise for enhancing interactive competencies and building learner confidence. El-Nabawi and Shaalana (2020) documented significant improvements in English language classroom interactions when instruction incorporated experiential learning principles, emphasizing hands-on practice, peer interaction, and reflective analysis of communication experiences. The theory's emphasis on learning through direct experience and reflection appears particularly relevant for communication skills, which are inherently interactive and context-dependent, requiring learners to adapt theoretical knowledge to dynamic interpersonal situations.

Bandura's (1986) Self-Efficacy Theory offers crucial insights into how individuals' beliefs about their capabilities influence motivation, behavior, and achievement in communication contexts. The theory identifies four primary sources of efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences (successful task completion), vicarious experiences (observing others' successes), verbal persuasion (encouragement from credible sources), and physiological states (emotional and physical responses that affect competence perceptions). In educational settings, self-efficacy has been consistently linked to academic achievement, persistence in challenging tasks, and educators' willingness to implement new strategies and approaches (Howell & Hickman, 2022).

Research has demonstrated that higher communication self-efficacy correlates with improved performance, greater willingness to engage in challenging interpersonal situations, and enhanced resilience when facing communication difficulties (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). For pre-service educators, communication self-efficacy may be particularly crucial given the high-stakes nature of parent conferences, challenging classroom management situations, and collaborative professional relationships that define early childhood education practice. Interventions that systematically address multiple sources of self-efficacy may be more effective than those focusing solely on skill instruction without attention to confidence-building and anxiety reduction.

Desimone's (2009) framework for effective professional development identifies five core features that distinguish impactful training from less effective approaches: content focus (alignment with specific knowledge and skills needed for practice), active learning (opportunities for meaningful engagement rather than passive reception), coherence (consistency with existing knowledge and beliefs), duration (sufficient time for learning and application), and collective participation (shared learning experiences that build professional community). Recent research has expanded these principles to emphasize the importance of teacher motivation, implementation support, and attention to organizational context factors that influence professional learning outcomes (Sims et al., 2023).

The application of professional development theory to communication skills training suggests that effective interventions must go beyond generic interpersonal skills instruction to address the specific communication challenges and contexts that early childhood educators encounter. Furthermore, single workshop experiences, while potentially valuable for awareness-building and initial skill introduction, may be insufficient for producing lasting behavior change without ongoing support, practice opportunities, and reinforcement mechanisms embedded within professional practice contexts.

Constructivist Learning Theory, grounded in the works of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, emphasizes learners' active construction of knowledge through interaction with their environment and collaboration with others (Kumari, 2022; Brau, 2020). In professional development contexts, constructivist approaches promote deeper learning through discovery, experimentation, and problem-solving activities that encourage participants to

integrate new information with existing knowledge and experience. Social constructivism particularly highlights the importance of collaborative learning environments where participants co-construct understanding through dialogue, shared reflection, and peer feedback.

Recent research has demonstrated the effectiveness of constructivist approaches in developing complex professional competencies that require adaptation to diverse contexts and ongoing refinement based on experience. The 5Es instructional model (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate), for instance, provides a framework for structuring learning experiences that promote deep understanding and practical application rather than surface-level skill acquisition (Kumari, 2022). For communication skills development, constructivist principles suggest the value of collaborative learning environments where participants can practice skills with peers, receive feedback, and refine their approaches through iterative cycles of experimentation and reflection.

Communication Skills in Early Childhood Education Contexts

Effective communication in early childhood settings requires sophisticated competencies that extend far beyond general interpersonal skills to encompass developmentally appropriate strategies, cultural responsiveness, and adaptive approaches tailored to diverse audiences and contexts. Communication with young children demands particular attention to nonverbal cues, language complexity adjustment, emotional regulation modeling, and positive behavior support strategies that promote learning while maintaining supportive relationships (Aziz et al., 2024). Research has consistently demonstrated that educators' communication approaches significantly influence children's social-emotional development, academic engagement, and overall classroom climate.

Parent communication represents another critical domain that requires distinct competencies, including cultural sensitivity, collaborative problem-solving skills, active listening techniques, and the ability to translate complex educational concepts into accessible language for families from diverse backgrounds. Effective parent-teacher communication has been linked to enhanced family engagement, improved home-school collaboration, and better developmental outcomes for children (Minke & Woodford, 2020). However, many educators report feeling inadequately prepared for challenging parent

interactions, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as behavioral concerns, developmental delays, or cultural differences in child-rearing approaches.

Professional communication with colleagues includes collaborative decision-making skills, conflict resolution abilities, shared leadership competencies, and the capacity to engage constructively in professional learning communities. Research has documented significant associations between positive colleague relationships and job satisfaction, professional growth, and overall program quality in early childhood settings (Lawecka, 2024). However, colleague communication skills often receive limited attention in pre-service preparation programs, despite their importance for career success and professional effectiveness.

Gaps in Current Research and Methodological Challenges

While the importance of communication skills in early childhood education is well-established, several significant research gaps persist in understanding how to effectively develop these competencies in pre-service educators. First, few studies have systematically evaluated communication skills training interventions using rigorous experimental designs that can establish causal relationships between training and improved outcomes. Most existing research relies on correlational designs, case studies, or single-group pre-post comparisons that, while informative, cannot definitively attribute improvements to specific interventions rather than alternative explanations.

Second, the field lacks validated, objective measures for assessing communication skills development in educational contexts. Most studies rely exclusively on self-report measures, which are susceptible to various bias sources and may not accurately reflect actual communication behaviors or effectiveness. The development of observational protocols, behavioral rating scales, and performance-based assessments represents a critical need for advancing research in this area.

Third, limited research has examined the long-term retention and transfer of communication skills from training contexts to authentic professional practice. Most professional development studies assess immediate post-training outcomes without following participants over time to determine whether training benefits persist and translate into improved professional performance. Longitudinal research designs with

multiple follow-up assessments are needed to understand the durability and practical impact of communication skills interventions.

Finally, few studies have systematically examined participants' perspectives on communication skills training, including their perceptions of relevance, engagement, and professional benefit. While participant satisfaction alone does not indicate intervention effectiveness, understanding how pre-service educators experience professional development can inform program improvements and identify factors that enhance motivation and engagement in professional learning opportunities.

Conceptual Framework

This investigation employs an integrated theoretical framework combining Experiential Learning (EL), Self-Efficacy (SE), Professional Development (PD), and Constructivist Learning (CL) principles to enhance communication skills (CS) and perceived impact on professional development (PIPD). The framework proposes that workshop activities addressing all four theoretical components will produce greater improvements in participant outcomes than single-theory approaches, though the single-group design limits definitive testing of this proposition.

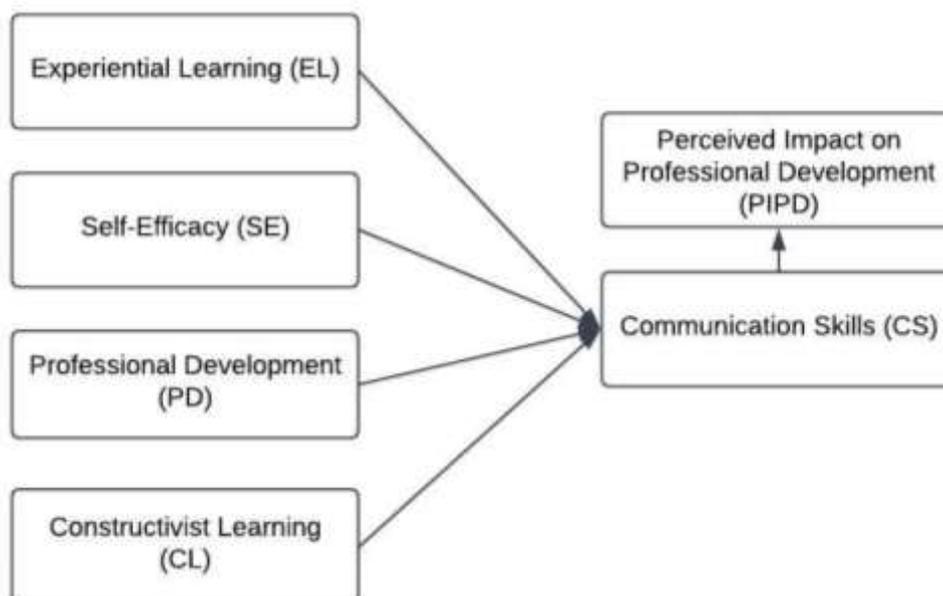


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This exploratory study employed a single-group pre-test/post-test design to obtain preliminary evidence on the potential impact of a communication skills workshop on pre-service early childhood educators' perceived competencies. The design consisted of one intervention group measured immediately before and after the workshop.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were 40 undergraduate Early Childhood Education students from Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University (85% female, 15% male; ages 19–22, $M = 20.3$, $SD = 1.1$). Purposive sampling was used based on required course enrollment to ensure full participation in the training session.

Workshop Intervention (Experiential Communication Skills Workshop; ECSW)

The ECSW was delivered as a single intensive 4-hour session grounded in experiential learning. The workshop comprised three sequential modules with four main activities, designed to strengthen communication across three professional domains.

Module 1: Foundations of professional communication (45 minutes)

Activity 1: Interactive Mini-Lecture + Guided Reflection

Content covered communication principles, active listening, empathy, and professional tone for early childhood contexts. Short reflection prompts were used to connect concepts to participants' prior experiences.

Module 2: Communication with Children (85 minutes)

Activity 2: Role-Play with Classroom Scenarios

Participants practiced child-centered verbal and nonverbal communication, including behavior guidance, emotional support, and instruction delivery, through simulated classroom scenarios.

Activity 3: Peer Feedback and Debriefing

Each role-play activity was followed by structured peer and facilitator feedback, focusing on communication clarity, emotional warmth, and the use of developmentally appropriate language.

Module 3: Communication with Parents and Colleagues (90 minutes)

Activity 4a: Parent Case Studies and Problem-Solving

Participants worked in small groups to practice parent–teacher communication in sensitive situations (e.g., child development concerns, conflict resolution).

Activity 4b: Teamwork Simulations for Colleague Communication

Brief collaborative tasks were used to practice professional dialogue, coordination, and constructive feedback with peers.

Across modules, learning cycles followed: concrete experience → reflection → conceptual clarification → active re-practice, ensuring skill rehearsal within the short workshop format.

Instruments

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of three validated Likert-scale measures (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree):

1. Child Communication Scale (8 items; $\alpha = .87$)
2. Parent Communication Scale (8 items; $\alpha = .84$)
3. Colleague Communication Scale (8 items; $\alpha = .89$)

Content validity was confirmed by three early childhood education experts. The post-test also included items assessing workshop relevance, engagement, and perceived professional value.

Data Collection Procedure

1. Pre-test administration: Immediately before the workshop, participants completed the baseline questionnaire measuring communication skills in the three domains.
2. Workshop delivery (4 hours): Participants attended Modules 1–3 in sequence with experiential activities as described above.
3. Post-test administration: Immediately after workshop completion, participants completed the same communication scales plus workshop evaluation items.
4. Data screening: Responses were checked for completeness and accuracy prior to analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using JAMOVI. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics and baseline levels. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-test scores for each communication domain. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated to assess practical significance. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Students were informed of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Responses were anonymized and used solely for research purposes. Approval was granted by the Department Head of the Early Childhood Education Program, and the study followed institutional ethical guidelines.

Design Limitations

Because the study used a single-group pre-test/post-test design without a control group, causal conclusions cannot be firmly established. Improvements may be influenced by testing effects or other external factors. In addition, reliance on self-report measures may overestimate gains, and immediate post-testing captures short-term perceptions only. These limitations are considered in the Discussion and Future Research sections.

Results

Sample Characteristics and Participation Rates

All 40 participants completed both pre-test and post-test assessments, yielding a 100% response rate that eliminates concerns about differential attrition or selection bias in outcome analysis. The complete participation rate reflects the required nature of workshop attendance as part of academic coursework, ensuring consistent exposure to the intervention across all participants, while potentially limiting generalizability to voluntary professional development contexts.

Participants demonstrated high levels of engagement throughout the workshop activities, with facilitator observations noting active participation in role-playing exercises, thoughtful contributions to group discussions, and constructive peer feedback during reflection activities. However, the required nature of participation and the dual role of the workshop as both an academic requirement and a research intervention may have

influenced engagement patterns and response tendencies in ways that cannot be definitively assessed through the available data.

Communication Skills Improvement Analysis

Statistical analysis revealed significant improvements in self-reported communication skills across all three professional domains, with effect sizes indicating large practical significance in addition to statistical significance. These findings provided preliminary evidence of potential intervention effectiveness, while requiring cautious interpretation given the methodological limitations previously discussed.

1. Child Communication Competencies

Participants reported substantial improvements in their perceived abilities to communicate effectively with young children. Mean scores increased from 25.95 (SD = 2.12) at pre-test to 31.65 (SD = 1.89) at post-test, representing a mean improvement of 5.70 points. This difference was statistically significant ($t = 13.56, p < 0.001$) and was associated with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.89$), indicating that the typical participant reported an improvement of nearly two standard deviations in child communication competence.

The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (4.88, 6.52) suggests that the true improvement in the population from which this sample was drawn likely falls within this range, assuming that the observed changes reflect genuine skill development rather than measurement artifacts or sources of bias. The magnitude of the effect size indicates that the reported improvements represent practically meaningful changes that, if valid, suggest substantial enhancement in perceived communication competence with children.

2. Parent Communication Abilities

Parent communication skills showed similarly substantial reported improvements. Mean scores increased from 27.90 (SD = 1.98) at pre-test to 32.85 (SD = 2.03) at post-test, yielding a mean difference of 4.95 points. This improvement was statistically significant ($t = 14.98, p < 0.001$) and demonstrated a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.96$), indicating that participants perceived meaningful enhancement in their family engagement and parent-teacher communication competencies.

The 95% confidence interval (4.30, 5.60) provides an estimate of the range within which the true population improvement is likely to fall. The large effect size suggests that

the reported changes represent substantial perceived skill development. Given that parent communication is a particularly challenging domain for many pre-service educators, these findings are noteworthy, while still requiring validation through more objective and multi-method assessment approaches in future research.

3. Colleague Communication Competencies

Professional communication skills with colleagues demonstrated the largest reported improvements, with mean scores increasing from 29.60 (SD = 1.85) at pre-test to 34.40 (SD = 1.92) at post-test, representing a mean difference of 4.80 points. This improvement achieved statistical significance ($t = 16.31, p < 0.001$) with the largest effect size observed (Cohen's $d = 2.14$), suggesting that participants perceived substantial enhancement in their collaborative and professional communication abilities.

The 95% confidence interval (4.22, 5.38) indicates the likely range of true population improvement, while the very large effect size suggests that reported changes represent meaningful perceived skill development in professional collaboration contexts. The magnitude of reported improvement in colleague communication may reflect participants' limited prior experience with professional workplace communication, potentially making them more sensitive to skill development in this domain.

Results Summary

Table 1 summarizes key findings across all three communication domains, highlighting the consistency of large effect sizes and statistical significance, while acknowledging that these results represent self-reported perceptions rather than objective skill assessments.

| Category | Pretest Mean | Posttest Mean | Difference (Post – Pre) | p-value (z-test) | Cohen's d | 95% Confidence Interval |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Child Communication | 25.95 | 31.65 | 5.7 | <0.0001 | 1.89 | [-6.524, -4.876] |
| Parent Communication | 27.90 | 32.85 | 4.95 | <0.0001 | 1.96 | [-5.598, -4.302] |
| Colleague Communication | 29.60 | 34.40 | 4.8 | <0.0001 | 2.14 | [-5.377, -4.223] |

Table 1: Summary of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results for Communication Skills Across All Categories

The consistency of large effect sizes across all domains ($d > 1.80$) suggests that participants perceived substantial improvements in communication competencies, regardless of the specific professional context. All effect sizes substantially exceed Cohen's criterion for large effects ($d = 0.80$), indicating that the reported changes represent practically meaningful differences that extend beyond statistical significance.

Workshop Evaluation and Participant Perceptions

Post-workshop evaluation data revealed high levels of participant satisfaction and perceived professional benefit, providing important context for interpreting quantitative skill-assessment outcomes. These perceptions represent subjective evaluations that may be influenced by various sources of bias, but they offer valuable insights into intervention acceptability and perceived relevance for professional preparation.

Regarding workshop content and relevance, 92.5% of participants ($n = 37$) agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop content was directly relevant to their professional preparation needs, with only 7.5% of participants ($n = 3$) providing neutral responses and no participants disagreeing. This high level of perceived relevance suggests strong alignment between the intervention content and participants' perceived learning needs, while acknowledging that such perceptions may be influenced by social desirability bias or limited awareness of actual professional development requirements.

Interactive activity engagement received positive evaluations from 87.5% of participants ($n = 35$), who rated role-playing exercises, case study analyses, and group discussions as valuable and engaging learning experiences. The remaining 12.5% of participants ($n = 5$) provided neutral ratings, with no negative evaluations reported. These findings suggest that the experiential learning approach resonated with most participants, while acknowledging that required participation may have influenced willingness to provide critical feedback.

Perceived professional impact achieved high ratings, with 90% of participants ($n = 36$) reporting that the workshop would positively influence their future professional practice. This finding aligns with the quantitative skill assessment improvements and suggests that participants perceived meaningful professional benefit from the intervention.

However, these perceptions represent anticipated rather than actual professional impact, as participants had not yet applied learned skills in authentic practice contexts.

Recommendation rates were similarly high, with 85% of participants ($n = 34$) indicating they would recommend similar workshops to other pre-service educators. This endorsement suggests that participants valued the experience and perceived it as beneficial for professional preparation, while acknowledging that recommendation rates may reflect social desirability rather than genuine assessment of intervention value.

Qualitative Feedback Themes

Open-ended feedback revealed several consistent themes that provide additional context for understanding participant experiences and intervention impact. The most frequently mentioned positive aspects included appreciation for practical application opportunities through role-playing and case study analysis, recognition of content relevance to anticipated professional challenges, and reported increases in confidence for handling difficult communication situations.

Participants particularly valued the opportunity to practice communication skills in low-stakes environments before encountering real professional challenges, suggesting that the experiential learning approach provided meaningful preparation experiences. Many respondents noted that the workshop helped them recognize the complexity of professional communication and provided concrete strategies for navigating challenging interactions.

Areas for improvement identified by participants included requests for additional practice time, more diverse case study scenarios reflecting different cultural contexts, and follow-up sessions to reinforce learning and provide ongoing skill development opportunities. These suggestions align with professional development research emphasizing the importance of sustained engagement and ongoing support for meaningful skill development.

Interpretation of Findings Linked to Theory

The findings indicated that the Experiential Communication Skills Workshop (ECSW) was associated with large gains in self-reported communication competence across child,

parent, and colleague domains. From an Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) perspective (Kolb, 1984), this pattern is expected because the workshop repeatedly engaged participants in concrete practice (role-play and case-based tasks), structured reflection (debriefing), conceptual clarification (mini-lecture), and re-application. Such cycles can accelerate skill awareness and perceived capability, particularly in short-format training.

The magnitude of improvement is also consistent with Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1986). Role-playing and teamwork simulations provide mastery experiences, while peer modeling and feedback support vicarious learning and verbal persuasion. These sources of efficacy likely increased participants' confidence to communicate effectively in professional situations, which may explain the strong pre-test/post-test gains on self-report scales. However, because self-efficacy is perception-based, the results may reflect confidence gains alongside or even more than behavioral skill gains, aligning with the reviewer's caution.

In addition, the ECSW aligns with core features of effective Professional Development (PD) theory (Desimone, 2009): it was content-focused (communication tasks central to early childhood education work), involved active learning, and was coherent with practicum realities. The consistently high satisfaction and relevance ratings suggest that participants recognized this alignment, reinforcing the PD argument that relevance and active participation strengthen perceived learning outcomes.

Notably, improvements were strong across all three domains, supporting the conceptual claim that pre-service communication competence is multi-contextual and benefits from integrated training. The especially high gains in colleague communication may reflect students' limited prior exposure to professional teamwork; therefore, structured simulations likely addressed a salient preparation gap.

Practical Implications

The results imply that even brief, theory-informed communication training can be a valuable entry point for pre-service early childhood education. Programs should not rely solely on practicum experience to develop communication competence; instead, they may embed structured experiential communication modules that mirror real classroom, parent, and collegial contexts. Because skill retention is unlikely from a single session,

training should be scaffolded over time to move from awareness and confidence toward stable professional competence.

Limitations

Interpretation remains cautious due to the single-group pre-test/post-test design, which precludes causal inference. Reliance on self-report measures may inflate gains through expectancy effects or social desirability bias, and immediate post-testing captures only short-term perceptions. The single-institution sample also limits generalizability.

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation provided initial evidence that a structured 3-hour communication skills workshop may enhance pre-service early childhood educators' perceived competencies across child, parent, and colleague interaction domains. The statistically significant improvements with large effect sizes ($d > 1.80$) suggest that participants experienced meaningful increases in communication confidence following the intervention. High participant satisfaction and perceived professional relevance further indicate that such training addresses recognized preparation needs in early childhood education programs.

However, the single-group design and exclusive reliance on self-report measures necessitate cautious interpretation. The observed improvements may reflect genuine skill development, increased confidence, social desirability bias, or other factors unrelated to actual communication competence. The immediate post-testing approach provides no information about skill retention or transfer to authentic professional contexts.

Despite these limitations, the findings suggested sufficient promise to warrant more rigorous experimental investigation. The consistently large effect sizes across all communication domains, combined with positive participant feedback, indicate that structured, theory-based communication training effectively addresses pre-service educators perceived learning needs. The brief intervention format offers practical advantages for resource-constrained educational programs while providing a foundation for developing more comprehensive professional development approaches.

Future research employing randomized controlled trials, objective assessment measures, and longitudinal follow-up will be essential for establishing definitive evidence of communication skills training effectiveness. This study represents an important first step toward systematic, evidence-based approaches to enhancing communication competencies among early childhood educators, contributing to the preparation of more confident and competent professionals who can better serve children, families, and educational communities.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct randomized controlled trials to establish causal effects of the ECSW on communication competence.
2. Include objective outcome measures (e.g., observed teaching simulations, supervisor/peer ratings, performance tasks) to distinguish skill gains from confidence gains.
3. Implement longitudinal follow-ups (e.g., 3, 6, and 12 months) to assess retention and transfer into practicum or early career practice.
4. Replicate the study across multiple institutions and diverse cohorts to enhance generalizability and cultural/contextual validity.

Recommendations for Implementation

1. Integrate ECSW-style experiential communication training as a formal component of early childhood education curricula, rather than offering it solely as an optional workshop.
2. Design communication instruction as progressive modules delivered across multiple semesters, incorporating repeated role-play activities, case-based parent communication exercises, and collegial teamwork practice.
3. Provide guided feedback structures, such as rubrics, peer coaching, and reflective journals, to sustain self-efficacy and support continuous skill refinement over time.

4. Link communication training to practicum experiences by requiring structured application tasks, such as parent–teacher conferencing simulations and co-teaching communication plans.

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