

THE BALIUAG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PREFERRED COMMUNICATION STYLE FOR STUDENT LEADERS

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the Baliuag University students' preferred communication style for student leaders. The researchers used the quantitative research method and descriptive research design using survey questionnaire to find the answers to the research problems. Respondents numbering 172 from different colleges were selected using stratified-random sampling. The results showed that the assertive communication style for student leaders was the most preferred by the Baliuag University college students. Personal encounters with student leaders were revealed to be the most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style for student leaders.

Keywords: communication styles, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, assertive, student leaders, students, preference

Students hold the power to elect a student leader, this allow them to choose an aspirant leader that best suit their preference: the kind of leader who can lead them to betterment and is a good role model for their fellow students. A student leaders' ability to provide great service is reflected on their communication styles. Each communication style preference can immensely influence a student's decision in electing aspirant leaders, which sets out a massive impact on the school community.

A student leader is an individual who can inspire and can direct action to achieve short term, medium term, and even long-term goals. A leader possesses the ability to motivate and to collaborate with others and has the right set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to lead an organization toward greatness. A student leader must also have a persuasive personality to make others follow him to achieve the organization's goals.

Every person has his or her own communication style that enables him/her to connect and to interact effectively with others. The way a person communicates and how he/she deals with certain situations speaks of his or her character. According to Alvernia University (2018):

There are four basic communication styles: passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. Individuals who use the passive communication style often act indifferently, yielding to others. Passive communicators usually fail to express their feelings or needs, allowing others to express themselves. The aggressive communication style is emphasized by speaking in a loud and demanding voice, maintaining intense eye contact, and dominating or controlling others by blaming, intimidating, criticizing, threatening or attacking them, among other traits. A passive-aggressive communication style user appears passive on the surface, but within, he or she may feel powerless or stuck, building up a resentment that leads to seething or acting out in subtle, indirect, or secret ways. Assertive communicators can express their own needs, desires, ideas and feelings, while also considering the needs of others. Assertive communicators aim for both sides to win in a situation, balancing one's rights with the rights of others.

Ever since the world began, communication is used to make the world function. For leaders, it is crucial to them to

acknowledge their own communication style as it shapes their personality and leadership identity which make people recognize them distinctively. The characteristics of four communication styles greatly contribute to establishing one's image, and as leaders, their unique communication style greatly impacts how they are perceived by their constituents.

The qualities of a good leader may also be seen in Communication Arts students. According to learn.org (n.d.), communication arts students hone their skills in research and analysis of information, public speaking, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, presentation speaking, decision-making, and problem solving through the course of their studies and internship. These aspects are incorporated in shaping an outstanding leader whom people want and need in their communities; additionally, communication arts students also develop leadership skills. Hence, this study relates to the researchers' college degree program.

The purpose of this study was to find out the Baliuag University college students' preferred communication style for student leaders. Bearing a significant relation to the main objective of this study, the most important factor that influenced their preference was also identified. This study is a great contribution to students, school administrators, and most especially to the current and aspiring student leaders.

Significance of the Study

This study was undertaken to find out the Baliuag University college students' preferred communication style for student leaders. Its contribution to the understanding of the society is highly significant and beneficial specifically to the following:

Student Leaders. This study will help current and aspiring student leaders of the Baliuag University identify which communication style they may apply in leading their fellow students.

Baliuag University College Students. Having awareness of the preference of their fellow students is important as each decision affects the whole school community.

Baliuag University. This study will benefit Baliuag University as student leaders highly contribute to the improvement of the school.

Researchers. This study may be used as a basis for both present and future researchers. They will be provided with suitable references for another study similar to this research.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This part presents the underpinning reviews of related literature and studies created by authors whose writings/articles have direct relevancy through strengthening the present study. This gave the researchers background to better understand the study.

Communication Styles

Communication style is a set of characteristics of a person in the act of communication. Certain forms were represented in one's communication style in terms of obtaining, interpreting, and responding to messages. Communication style also measures how an individual perceives and structures social relations, and how he/she analyze the information and transform it into operative behaviors amid social judgments. Hence, communication style represents how a person manages their interpersonal interactions; it is a method of illustration how people perceive and evaluate information (Duță et al., 2015).

Communication style is described as a combination of the speech qualities of a person when communicating. Specific methods of receiving the message, individual means of interpreting the message, particular ways of conveying the response, and feedback all underlie style. The style of

communication reflects how a person constructs his social environment. Moreover, communication style is an indication of how to process information and turn the information into active behavior in social contexts.

The acquisition of a particular communication style points out certain qualities of people, even the kind of conversation they are having (Novak, 2019). In spite of the uniqueness of individual's communication styles, they may still belong to general categories. The four basic communication styles can be classified as: passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. Each style utilizes both verbal and non-verbal communication cues. While all these communication styles are used widely, the combination of all positive characteristics of the other styles make assertive communication style to be considered as the most effective (Novak, 2019).

Passive Communication Style

This communication style is usually used by people who desire to appear casual about the matter at hand. Either they try to hold their take on the subject to themselves, or they make it appear like they approve of every part of the conversation. The passive communicators show doubtful non-verbal communication cues when speaking like avoiding eye contact, poor body posture, or rejecting when asked for input. When put in a middle of a conflict, passive communicator's greatest motivation is to maintain the peace; however, despite the positive sentiment, it can direct difficulties to the communicator and affecting them negatively. Inability to speak up can induce one to feel apprehensive, downhearted, or bitter towards the words and actions of others. The passive communicators fail to express their actual opinions, hence, restricting the information conveyed between and among individuals implicated.

According to Newton (2011), passive communicators are all about pleasing others and avoiding conflict. An

individual who uses this type of communication style acts as if the needs of others are more essential, and that others have greater rights and contributions to make. Passive communicators are apologetic, inexpressive, feels like a victim, blames others, refuses compliments, avoids any confrontation, finds difficulty in taking responsibility or decisions, and yields to someone else's preferences. When talking, the volume of their voice is soft. They avoid eye contacts. They make themselves as small as possible and consider themselves lower than others. They mostly use these kinds of phrases: *"Oh, it's nothing, really."* *"Oh, that's all right; I didn't want it anymore."* *"You choose; anything is fine."*

Aggressive Communication Style

This communication style is used by communicators who want to convey their thoughts in often a bold and controlling manner without hesitation. Non-verbal cues used by these types of communicators include and is not limited to intense eye contact, implicate, and do not take no as an answer when they speak. This communication style possesses relaying standpoints and views in offensive manners that disregards other people's right. Often, this style is used by people who want to establish their authority. Rather than listening, they impose power and demand to others in order to make them follow or comply to their commands. Regardless, this style makes others feel inadequate or unimportant. Aggressive communicators often threaten others, which overthrows the sense of conversations where thoughts should be shared, heard, and attended by both parties.

The focus of aggressive communication style is all about winning frequently at the expense of others. A person who is aggressive acts as though his wants are the most essential, as if he has more rights and can give more than others. Aggressive communicators are frightening, threatening, loud, hostile, willing to achieve goals at expense

of others, demanding, abrasive, unpredictable, and intimidating. When talking, the volume of their voice is loud. They are most likely to have a scowl or frown in their faces. They try to stand over others to show them they are bigger. They are out to win. They mostly use these kinds of phrases: *"You are crazy!"* *"Do it my way!"* *"You make me sick!"* *"That is just about enough out of you!"*

Passive-aggressive Communication Style

This style brings together characteristics of passive and aggressive communication styles. The passive-aggressive communicators speak in a neutral manner, which appears to be passive, but indirectly implies anger or aggressiveness. These communicators often mutter side comments to themselves despite being in the presence of other people; when confronted, they refuse to make it known and avoid confronting what is bothering them. This leads passive-aggressive communicators to give silent treatment to those concerned, or to talk to unconcerned people regarding the issue to avoid the circumstances altogether. In general, people tend to be passive-aggressive communicators because they are worried about the reaction they might get from others and refuse to disagree with someone directly.

Passive-aggressive is a communication style in which people appear passive on the surface but are letting out their frustration indirectly. People who act in this way are frequently helpless and resentful, and they express their feelings by subtly undermining the target of their resentments (actual or imagined), even if it means sabotaging themselves. They are indirectly aggressive, sarcastic, complaining, sulky, patronizing, and two-faced. They are pleasant to people to their faces, but poisonous behind their backs. When talking, they often speak with a sugary sweet voice. They have a sweet and innocent look on their faces. They pretend to be warm and friendly by being too physically close. They use such statements as: *"Why don't you go ahead*

and do it; my ideas aren't very good anyway" "You always know better in any case." "Oh, don't you worry about me, I can sort myself out – like I usually have to."

Assertive Communication Style

Out of the other communication styles discussed, the assertive communication style is the most effective style. Assertive communicators are known to voice out their opinions and ideas in a polite way; simultaneously, they are being considerate of others. They appreciate others' value, thought, and idea, and they communicate in a calm voice while making non-intimidating eye contact. This communication style is encouraged as it values openness and understanding. Assertive communicators do not blame others and often, they take accountability for the fault. These communicators use two-way communication which involves listening and giving feedback and in turn strengthens conversation and information flow.

High self-esteem fosters assertive communication. It is the healthiest and most successful style of communication. Assertive communicators do not use manipulating words, but they are also not pushovers; it is simply because they recognize their own limits and others'. Out of expectations, assertive is the style that the majority of individuals employ the least although it is proven to be the most effective one. They achieve goals without hurting others, are protective of their own rights and are respectful of others' rights, socially and emotionally expressive, makes own choices and takes responsibility for them, asks directly for needs to be met while accepting the possibility of rejection. They use medium pitch and speed when speaking. They are relaxed which makes them maintain a good eye contact. They are in control but also respectful of others.

Conceptual Framework

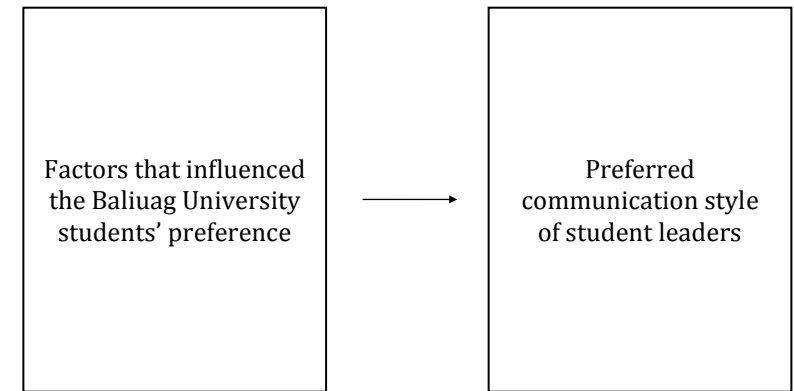


Figure 1. Paradigm of the study.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the Baliuag University college students' preferred communication style for student leaders.

This study sought to answer the following specific problems:

1. Which communication style of student leaders is the most preferred by the Baliuag University college students:
 - 1.1 passive communication style;
 - 1.2 aggressive communication style;
 - 1.3 passive-aggressive communication style; and
 - 1.4 assertive communication style?
2. Which influencing factor is the most important for the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders?
 - 2.1 personal encounters with student leaders;
 - 2.2 ideal communication practices of a student leader;

- 2.3 observed communication practices of student leaders;
- 2.4 student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers; and
- 2.5 others?

Research Design

A quantitative method was used in this study and the descriptive research design was employed to determine the Baliuag University students' preferred communication style for student leaders.

Quantitative method concentrates on generating results from quantitative responses collected; its approach is to provide the respondents with close-ended questions. The use of numerical equivalence helped the researchers in determining the specific communication styles of leaders and which style is most preferred by other students. In addition, the most important factor influencing their preference was also discovered.

The descriptive research design was utilized to gather needed information for the study. It enabled the researchers to collect measurable and accurate data concerning the course of this study. A survey questionnaire was also used to collect the needed data for the study.

Sampling

The researchers used the stratified-random sampling method in selecting the respondents. A total of 1,722 Baliuag University college students were enrolled during the study's data collection period from second trimester of the academic year 2021-2022. Ten percent of the population was used as sample for this study, each element was randomly selected through stratified-random sampling method. A total of 172 participating college students answered the survey.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents Across College Departments

College Departments	Population	Sample
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	442	44
College of Education and Human Development	113	11
College of Environment Design and Engineering	303	30
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	241	24
College of Information Technology Education	87	9
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	36	4
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	500	50
Total	1,722	172

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents across college departments. The sample size was computed by getting ten percent from each population stratum.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used to collect the needed data for the study was a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was researcher-made derived from the literatures and studies adapted from credible sources on the internet.

The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section asks the respondents name and the college department they belong to. The second section contained the characteristics of each communication style.

The third section contained the factors that influence a students' preference of communication style for student leaders.

The factors that influence the students' preference of leader's communication style listed in the questionnaire were researcher-made. The first factor "personal encounters with student leaders" referred to the past and current experiences of that students had shared with student leaders. These experiences came from activities done within the school before and during the pandemic such as room and departmental engagements, in-campus and virtual events. The second factor "ideal communication practices of a student leader" meant the most desirable and suitable communication practices of a student leader based on the respondent's perspective. The third factor "observed communication practices of student leaders" was the view of the respondents on the communication practices of student leaders in leading fellow students. The fourth factor "student leader's communication practices as reported by other observers" was the knowledge about the communication practices of student leaders as shared and circulated around the school community. The researchers formulated the stated factors based on their own observation and understanding as students. They found the factors influential in finding out the communication style preference for student leaders which enabled them to come up with their own research instrument. The answered questionnaires helped the researchers achieve the objectives of this study.

The questionnaire underwent content validation by three professors. A pretest was also conducted with the help of five students.

Data Gathering Procedure

After the approval of the questionnaire, the researchers disseminated and completed the survey made in Google Forms via online messaging from April 8, 2022, to

April 19, 2022. The responses were automatically recorded in Google Forms. The researchers then collected the responses individually and placed them in one file document in order to tally the answers.

Data Processing and Statistical Treatment

The researchers tabulated and tallied all the gathered data to determine the result of this study.

Cluster Analysis. This was used to group similar points into four clusters (passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive) based on the answers of each respondent to questions 1 to 20.

Frequency Distribution and Percentage. This was used to find out the frequency and percentage of the Baliuag University college students who preferred the characteristics of each communication style of student leaders from Questions 1 to 20.

Standard Ranking Type. A standard ranking question asked the respondents to rank all attributes in a set. This was used to know the preference data for every single attribute.

Using the methods discussed, the researchers equitably assessed the entire data result of the Baliuag University students' preferred communication style of student leaders, and also the factors that influenced their preference.

Discussion

The researchers performed cluster analysis and used frequency distribution and percentage to determine which of the four communication styles of student leaders was the most preferred by the Baliuag University college students as presented in the **Appendix: Characteristics of the**

Communication Styles of Student Leaders. The researchers calculated the frequency by multiplying the total number of respondents of 172 by the total number of questions of 20 which resulted to 3440. The frequency was based on the number of respondents who preferred each communication style's characteristic from questions 1 to 20. The researchers divided the frequency of each communication style by the overall frequency of 3440 and multiplied the quotient to 100 to get the percentage.

The summary of the cluster analysis, and the frequency distribution and percentage result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Cluster Analysis Result for Communication Style Preference of Baliuag University College Students for Student Leaders

Communication Styles	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	2770	80.52%
Passive	305	8.87%
Aggressive	217	6.31%
Passive-Aggressive	148	4.30%
Total	3440	100%

As gathered from Table 2, the assertive communication style had a percentage of 80.52%; the passive communication style had a percentage of 8.87%; the aggressive communication style had a percentage of 6.31%, and the passive-aggressive communication style had a percentage of 4.30%.

It is most important for a leader to acknowledge his own communication style as it shapes his personality and leadership identity for people to recognize, which is shown while being in the position. The characteristics under the four communication styles greatly contribute to establishing one's

image. As a leader, unique communication style greatly impacts how he is going to be perceived by his constituents. Through identifying the communication style preference of students for student leaders, the current and aspiring leaders will know what kind of approach is suitable for the people they are leading.

Table 2 also indicates that assertive communication style is the preferred communication style of the Baliuag University college students for student leaders. This result proves the article by Novak (2019) where out of the four communication styles, assertive was found to be the most effective. Assertive communicators voice out their opinions and ideas in a polite way, simultaneously being considerate of others. They appreciate every value, thought, and idea, and communicate in a calm voice while making non-intimidating eye contact. This style is encouraged as it values openness and understanding. Even if it is the fault of others, they will remove the blame and put it on themselves. The assertive style relies on two-way communication. It involves listening and feedback, which strengthens conversation and information flow. These mentioned characteristics of assertive were preferred over the characteristics of the other three communication styles as proven by the result of this study. Moreover, as stated by Newton (2011), assertive is the healthiest and most successful style of communication. The result shows that assertive is preferred in 19 out of 20 questions.

As presented in the first table in the **Appendix: Characteristics of the Communication Styles of Student Leaders**, passive was the preferred communication style in question number 2. The respondents preferred a leader who "prioritizes needs, opinions, and values of the others over his own," which is a characteristic of a passive communicator, more than a leader who "achieves goals without hurting the others" which is a characteristic of an assertive communicator. When it comes to achieving goals, the respondents preferred a selfless leader who gives

importance to people more than the goal itself over leaders who pursue goals in any circumstances as long as no one gets hurt along the way. With a total number of 81 respondents who preferred passive and 79 who preferred assertive, the gap between these two communication styles was two only, which proved that assertive was still preferred over the other communication styles. According to Johnson and Hackmanj (2018, p.21), communication style is one factor that contributes to the effectiveness of a leader. The result showed that the respondents preferred the assertive style of communication as they believed that its characteristics are effective in leadership.

The researchers applied the standard ranking method to determine the most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders. The researchers gave an equivalent score of 1 for every factor that was given the rank of 4, 2 for every factor that was given the rank of 3, 3 for every factor that was given the rank of 2, and 4 for every factor that was given the rank of 1. Then, the sums of all the scores for the four factors were calculated. The results of the ranking method are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for student leaders' communication style

Factors	Rank				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Personal encounters with student leaders	78	38	26	30	172
Ideal communication practices of a student leader	35	51	56	30	172
Observed communication practices of student leaders	38	67	53	14	172
Student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers	21	16	37	98	172

Table 4

Most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for student leaders' communication style

Factors	Sum of the Equivalent Scores				Total	Rank Results
	1	2	3	4		
Personal encounters with student leaders	312	114	52	30	508	1
Observed communication practices of student leaders	152	201	106	14	437	2
Ideal communication practices of a student leader	140	153	112	30	435	3
Student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers	80	48	74	98	300	4

As presented in Table 4, personal encounters with student leaders had a total score of 508; observed communication practices of student leaders had a total score of 437; ideal communication practices of a student leader had a total score of 435; and student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers had a total score of 300. It can be concluded from the data that the personal encounters with student leaders was the most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders.

Personal encounters with student leaders ranked first among the four factors. Having an experience of engaging with and getting to know student leaders personally may enable a student to employ his perception in making a sound judgment. It is easier to decide based on experience.

Observed communication practices of student leaders ranked second among the four factors. To judge someone based on what is only seen from a distance may be unfair and inadequate. There may be no assurance that what one has observed is accurate as it is only based on observation.

Ideal communication practices of a student leader ranked third among the four factors. The respondents may have focused more on the existing characteristics they have already seen rather than on their ideal characteristics of a student leader. One's ideal communication practices may not be applied or are not possessed by current and aspiring student leaders.

Student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers ranked fourth among the four factors. It may not be reliable to depend only on the description of others. Being influenced by this factor can also lead to misinformation and to fake news.

The following points were the six responses for other factors that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders.

- *"Collaboration of ideas with unity and good communication with the other people around them."*
- *"Connection of his communication in relation to the needs of the organization or group of people they will lead."*
- *"Low-key assertive dominance over his team, never do commands but instead helping the team to go and to function smoothly."*
- *"As long as he/she will do what is right, respect others' opinions, willing to listen and learn from others and does not belittle his fellow officers. If competent and he/she is determined to be a leader or make a change (not just for showing off the title), then I will vote for him/her as a student leader."*

- *"Learning from others."*

Each response was personally stated by the respondents, but the statements they wrote are the qualities they want in leadership and not the factors that influenced their preferences.

Conclusions

The results of the findings showed that the most preferred communication style of the Baliuag University college students for student leaders was the assertive communication style. The factor that ranked first among the four factors that influenced the Baliuag University students' communication style preference for student leaders was the "personal encounters with student leaders." Ranked second was the "observed communication practices of the student leaders." Ranked third was the "ideal communication practices of a student leader" while the "student leaders' communication practices as reported by other observers" ranked fourth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby recommended;

1. Since it was found that assertive communication style was the preferred communication style of the Baliuag University college students for student leaders, student leaders should recognize the characteristics of an assertive communicator in leadership. This will help them to lead the school community better.
2. Since the factors that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders was not the main focus of this study, future researchers may conduct a study wherein it is the primary research problem.

3. Subsequent to the result of the most important factor that influenced the Baliuag University college students' preference for the communication style of student leaders which was the "personal encounters with student leaders", Baliuag University administrators should conduct engaging student activities in order to enable the student leaders to further express themselves and to interact openly with their fellow students.
4. Future researchers must continue to conduct researches pertaining to students' communication style preference for student leaders. Through research and investigation, school administrators will be provided with information and data as a basis for having student leaders who can help in the betterment and growth of the school community.

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