



**EXPLORING THE RELEVANCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
SKILLS IN LEGAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF GIMPA LAW
SCHOOL**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institution. I further declare that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Declaration by Supervisor

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertations laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC-GIJ).

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of strategic communication in the academic and professional development of law students at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). Although communication is globally recognized as a core competency in legal practice, its structured integration within Ghanaian legal education remains limited. Using a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey design, the study assessed students' awareness of strategic communication, the extent to which communication training is embedded in the curriculum, the skills students consider most critical, and the perceived gaps in existing training efforts. Data were collected from 330 law students selected through stratified random sampling and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Findings revealed that while overall awareness of strategic communication was high, depth of understanding varied considerably among students. Communication-related activities such as legal writing and moot court were present but inconsistently implemented, with many students describing the training as optional rather than compulsory. Legal writing and oral advocacy emerged as the most valued skills, whereas negotiation, client counselling, and public speaking received comparatively less emphasis. Significant gaps were identified, including limited practice opportunities, insufficient structured feedback, and unequal access to communication activities across different cohorts. These gaps were perceived as hindering students' readiness for legal practice. The study concludes that communication training at GIMPA Law School is moderately integrated but fragmented, requiring a more systematic and equitable approach. It recommends institutionalizing communication modules, strengthening experiential learning, enhancing lecturer feedback mechanisms, and conducting periodic curriculum reviews to align legal education with contemporary professional demands.

Keywords: strategic communication, legal education, GIMPA Law School, communication skills, experiential learning, curriculum development.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God and my family (especially my husband, Mr. Michael Kingsley Kormey; SSNIT manager at Wa Branch and my son Alvin K. Kormey Jnr.) for their immense support in various ways in ensuring the successful completion of my academic journey at UniMAC- IJ, and this project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABA	American Bar Association
CAT	Communication Accommodation Theory
ELT	Experiential Learning Theory
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
GLLC	General Legal Council
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LLM	Master of Laws
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRA	Solicitors Regulation Authority

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study examines the relevance of strategic communication skills in the academic and professional development of law students at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). Communication remains a central pillar of legal practice, encompassing skills such as persuasive speaking, legal writing, client counseling, and negotiation. However, despite its importance, communication training in Ghanaian legal education has often been underemphasized and fragmented. This research adopts a student-centered perspective to explore how law students at GIMPA perceive their communication training, the skills they consider most critical to their success, and the gaps that exist in their academic experience. By situating the issue within global, regional, and local contexts, the study contributes to a broader conversation on aligning Ghana's legal education with international best practices while responding to the practical needs of students.

1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is a fundamental competency in higher education, particularly within professional disciplines such as law. In the contemporary legal and academic milieu, the capacity to articulate complex ideas with clarity, persuasiveness, and strategic intent is as vital as possessing profound legal knowledge. Strategic communication encompasses the intentional and goal-directed application of oral, written, and interpersonal skills to effectively influence, inform, and advocate (Smith & Jones, 2021). For law students, strategic communication is indispensable in classroom discussions, moot courts, legal writing assignments, and client-related scenarios.

Globally, legal education has evolved to acknowledge that success in legal practice is not solely determined by doctrinal mastery but also by the ability to communicate persuasively. In the United States, the American Bar Association (ABA, 2018) mandates that law schools integrate communication training, particularly in legal writing and advocacy, into their curricula. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA, 2016) incorporates

communication within its professional competency framework. Consequently, numerous law schools have established legal writing labs, oral advocacy clinics, and experiential learning modules that engage students in communication-intensive tasks. In contrast, legal education in much of Africa, including Ghana, has traditionally emphasized theoretical instruction, with relatively limited focus on communication as a structured learning objective.

- According to Adepoju and Amankwah (2020), many law faculties in West Africa regard communication as a soft skill rather than a core professional competency. Studies indicate that students often encounter communication training informally through extracurricular platforms such as moot court, debate clubs, or internships rather than through an integrated curriculum (Mensah, 2019; Okeke, 2020). In Ghana, legal educators and regulators have increasingly recognized the necessity to enhance the teaching and assessment of communication in law schools. However, there remains a paucity of research examining how law students themselves perceive these efforts and how they engage with communication as part of their academic development. At GIMPA Law School, students are exposed to elements such as legal writing, research, and oral argumentation.

Despite these efforts, informal feedback and anecdotal observations suggest that students exhibit considerable variation in their exposure, interest, and confidence regarding communication skills. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how law students at GIMPA Law School comprehend, experience, and evaluate their development in strategic communication. Rather than assessing institutional policies or faculty implementation, the focus is on capturing the student perspective their awareness of the importance of communication, the areas they value most, and the gaps they perceive in their training. In doing so, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how future legal professionals are engaging with one of the most essential components of legal education.

1.2 Problem Statement

Effective communication is essential in both legal education and practice. The capacity to present arguments persuasively, draft legal documents with clarity, negotiate effectively, and engage clients professionally is central to successful legal work. Despite the increasing emphasis on

strategic communication in global legal education reforms, its integration into the Ghanaian legal education system, particularly at the institutional level, remains inconsistent and inadequately structured.

Law students often receive extensive doctrinal instruction but minimal, fragmented training in communication skills, leaving them underprepared for real-world legal practice, where communication is both a daily necessity and a key differentiator in performance. At the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) Law School, these challenges are particularly pertinent. Although the institution offers a legal writing course, moot court sessions, and occasional practical workshops, many of these initiatives are inconsistently implemented, optional rather than compulsory, and poorly aligned across the curriculum. Anecdotal evidence and informal feedback from students suggest that opportunities to develop communication skills are not evenly distributed across academic levels, nor are they integrated in a manner that supports continuous growth and feedback.

Consequently, the communication training landscape is characterized by fragmentation and informality. Students often rely on extracurricular platforms, such as debate clubs or voluntary moot court participation, rather than formal instruction to develop their communication competencies. This places disproportionate responsibility on the student and creates inequities, as only those with prior exposure or personal initiative acquire these essential skills. Those with weaker communication foundations or limited access to external support may graduate without attaining the level of competence required for legal practice, advocacy, or postgraduate studies. Furthermore, assessments at GIMPA Law School tend to emphasize written legal analysis in exam formats rather than oral communication, collaborative tasks, or real-time argumentation. As a result, students may succeed academically but lack confidence when tasked with practical communication tasks such as client counseling, courtroom speaking, or legal document drafting. The disconnect between what students are expected to master for graduation and what they actually need in professional settings poses a significant risk to graduate readiness and employability. While international institutions have moved toward communication-based competencies as part of their law curriculum, most law schools in Ghana, including GIMPA, have yet to fully align with this model. Strategic communication is often perceived as a soft skill rather than a professional necessity. There is limited research examining how students at GIMPA themselves perceive this

issue: their awareness levels, the skills they value, and where they believe the curriculum is lacking. Therefore, this study seeks to address a critical gap in understanding by exploring the perceptions, experiences, and communication needs of law students at GIMPA. It focuses on evaluating the extent to which communication training is embedded in the academic program, the specific skills students consider most important, and the gaps that exist between institutional provision and student expectations. Addressing this issue is essential for aligning GIMPA's legal education with both global best practices and the evolving demands of the Ghanaian legal system.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective:

To explore how GIMPA law students engage with and perceive the role of strategic communication skills in their academic and professional development.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives:

To assess the level of awareness among GIMPA law students about the importance of strategic communication.

To examine how communication training is integrated into students' legal education.

To identify communication skills, students consider most important to their success.

To explore gaps between students' perceived communication needs and current training provided.

1.4 Research Questions

How aware are GIMPA law students of the importance of strategic communication?

How is communication training currently delivered in their academic experience?

Which communication skills do students view as critical to their success?

What are the perceived gaps between student needs and existing communication programs?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses specifically on students enrolled at the GIMPA Law School. It assesses their awareness, experiences, and perceptions of communication training as part of their legal education. The scope is limited to strategic communication skills within the academic context, including legal writing, oral advocacy, and interpersonal communication relevant to legal practice. The research does not extend to practicing lawyers or graduates already in professional service; rather, it concentrates on the formative stage of legal education where communication skills are first systematically introduced and developed. Furthermore, while reference is made to global and regional trends for comparative purposes, the empirical findings and analysis are restricted to the GIMPA Law School environment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance as it addresses a pressing issue in legal education: the adequacy of student preparation for effective communication in both academic and professional legal contexts. In Ghana and numerous other developing nations, legal education predominantly emphasizes theoretical knowledge, often at the expense of practical skills such as communication. As the legal profession increasingly demands practitioners capable of articulating legal arguments, engaging with diverse audiences, and conveying complex ideas with clarity and persuasiveness, the necessity for structured communication training in law schools has become more critical than ever. At the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) Law School, there is a growing recognition of this need, yet limited empirical evidence exists to guide institutional enhancements. Although communication-focused components, such as moot courts and legal writing courses, are present, the extent to which they effectively address students' needs has not been systematically investigated. This study aims to bridge that gap by providing a student-centered analysis of communication education within GIMPA's law program.

The findings of this study will be valuable in several respects. Firstly, they will offer a clearer understanding of students' perceptions of communication training, identifying what they find beneficial, what they perceive as lacking, and which skills they deem most crucial for their success. These insights will assist faculty, curriculum developers, and academic administrators in making

evidence-based decisions regarding the structuring and enhancement of communication instruction across courses and academic levels.

Secondly, the research holds practical relevance for enhancing student preparedness for professional legal environments. As GIMPA continues to establish itself as a center of excellence in legal and governance education, aligning its programs with international best practices is imperative. The study's findings can inform curriculum reviews, teaching strategies, and co-curricular programming to ensure that students graduate not only with legal knowledge but also with the ability to effectively communicate that knowledge in courts, law offices, policy meetings, and public forums.

Thirdly, the study has broader implications for legal education in Ghana. By documenting students' experiences and identifying areas for improvement, the research contributes to the national discourse on law curriculum reform. It supports the ongoing efforts of the General Legal Council and other academic bodies to transition toward a more holistic, skills-based model of legal education that incorporates communication as a core competence.

Finally, the study will also serve as a foundation for future academic inquiry. Researchers interested in legal pedagogy, communication in higher education, or professional skills training can build upon the findings to conduct comparative studies, develop interventions, or evaluate reforms. In this manner, the study advances both practice and scholarship in legal education.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters for clarity and coherence.

Chapter One presents the introduction, including the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and organization of the study.

Chapter Two reviews existing literature relevant to strategic communication in legal education, covering global perspectives, African experiences, and the Ghanaian context.

Chapter Three describes the methodology employed, including the research design, study population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analytical procedures.

Chapter Four presents and analyzes the findings of the study, supported by tables, charts, and narrative discussions.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings, conclusions drawn from the results, and practical recommendations for enhancing communication training in legal education.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study by presenting the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, and significance. It also outlined the scope, providing boundaries for the research, and explained how the study is organized across the remaining chapters. The overarching aim of the research is to explore how GIMPA law students perceive and engage with strategic communication as part of their education. By addressing this issue, the study sets the foundation for understanding both the strengths and limitations of current communication training, paving the way for more targeted curriculum development and policy interventions.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews theoretical and empirical literature related to the development and integration of strategic communication skills within legal education, focusing on student perceptions and institutional practices. The review is organized according to the study's four objectives: student awareness, curriculum integration, prioritization of key communication skills, and identification of institutional gaps. It builds on both global and local perspectives, drawing attention to the emerging consensus that effective legal training must encompass strong communication competencies. The chapter concludes with a theoretical framework, conceptual model, and a summary of key insights.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Awareness of Strategic Communication Among Students

The development of new skills depends entirely on awareness. Students of law need to understand the fundamental role of strategic communication skills for achieving their academic and professional goals. Educational institutions across the globe dedicate increasing attention to providing students with early exposure to both communication theory and practice. Students at law schools in the United States and United Kingdom gain advantages from organized entry programs that demonstrate the value of legal writing and public advocacy and oral advocacy according to Evans and Webb (2020).

The early educational programs lead students to develop both their attitudes and their ability to learn communication skills. According to Smith & Jones (2021) strategic communication requires more than confident speech and clear writing since it demands both the selection of suitable tools and the deployment of correct tones and contents to fulfill legal or academic goals. Students learn to develop persuasive arguments while mastering effective feedback responses and audience adaptation skills for their work with clients and judges and colleagues.

West African research shows that students show strategic communication awareness only after real-world situations occur. Adepoju and Amankwah (2020) investigated multiple institutions through their research which found that students learn to value communication skills only when they encounter actual professional situations including moot court and internship interviews. Nigerian law students tend to overlook the significance of communication during their early studies because their curriculum contains limited practical learning components according to Okeke (2020). The level of communication awareness among Ghanaian law students depends on their previous involvement according to Mensah (2019). Students from elite educational backgrounds combined with past debating participation display increased self-assurance about their abilities and knowledge.

GIMPA Law School shows varying student awareness regarding communication skills because some actively pursue these opportunities yet many discover their essential value during their final year or after graduation. An explicit introduction of communication as a professional asset during the early stages becomes essential because students demonstrate different levels of understanding regarding this concept.

2.2.2 Integration of Communication Skills in Legal Education

The integration of communication skills into legal education produces graduates who can effectively handle professional legal environments. The worldwide adoption of this practice has become the standard. The American Bar Association (ABA, 2018) demands that law schools teach students both written and oral communication skills in a substantial manner. The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA, 2016) and the Bar Standards Board of the United Kingdom both establish communication as a fundamental requirement for legal qualification. Law faculties have created extensive semester-long programs which teach legal writing and oral advocacy together with client counseling and negotiation.

The development of communication skills depends heavily on experiential learning. The experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (2018) supports the use of moot court and role-play and legal clinics because these activities allow students to practice communication through simulated or real-world scenarios. The activities enable students to practice while receiving

feedback which leads to important reflections that help them develop confidence and adaptability. African institutions generally position communication training outside their core curriculum instead of making it a fundamental academic requirement. The assessment of communication skills is absent in many Ghanaian and Nigerian law schools according to Leggett and James (2021) and student academic performance in moot courts or presentations does not affect their grades.

The lack of serious attention to communication from both students and faculty members results from this situation. GIMPA includes legal writing and moot court and client simulations in its curriculum but these components lack consistent integration throughout different courses. The instruction of legal research and writing at one academic level does not continue through subsequent years. The feedback mechanism shows insufficient development in most cases.

The authors Asare and Osei (2020) argue that students need continuous reinforcement and clear grading criteria to develop professional communication consistency and confidence. True integration requires teaching communication skills progressively while maintaining rigorous assessment methods and applying them across various academic contexts throughout the entire educational period.

2.2.3 Communication Skills Students Consider Most Important

The legal profession requires complex communication methods that include both spoken arguments and written documents and client meetings and public addresses and negotiation and teamwork between professionals. Students select particular skills based on their academic training and professional objectives. Students who aim to practice litigation develop strong oral advocacy skills but corporate law students focus on writing abilities and negotiation techniques.

According to Evans and Webb (2020) students from the U.S. and U.K. identified structured feedback and coaching in legal writing and public speaking as the most valuable elements of their educational training. The research by Smith and Jones (2021) shows that students and employers equally value the ability to modify their communication approach according to their audience and situation. The emphasis on communication skills in Sub-Saharan Africa stems from insufficient educational structures. The students from Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya according to Adepoju and Amankwah (2020) placed legal writing and oral presentation at the top of their priorities because these subjects received minimal attention in their formal education.

According to Mensah (2019) Ghanaian students want more opportunities to practice persuasive writing and courtroom speaking and negotiation techniques. The students at GIMPA demonstrate through internal forums and moot court reviews that their top three priorities consist of oral advocacy and structured legal writing and negotiation. Students face difficulties in obtaining sufficient training opportunities for these skills. Students who have experience in debate or public speaking report feeling more ready while others lack confidence because they have had little experience and receive inconsistent classroom support. Students demonstrate awareness about communication skills yet their self-assurance and proficiency differ according to their educational background and classroom organization and institutional resources available to them.

2.2.4 Gaps Between Student Needs and Institutional Training

The essential professional skill of communication receives recognition yet law faculties in Ghana lack consistent structured assessed training programs for this skill. Evans and Webb (2020) explain this gap between theory and practice as the "theory-practice gap" because institutions teach theoretical concepts without providing any structured approach to their practical implementation. Leggett and James (2021) argue that the heavy dependence on optional activities like moot court and debate clubs creates unfairness because students who are confident or outgoing or well-informed are more likely to join these activities.

The average student who faces communication difficulties or fears judgment receives inadequate support which puts them at a disadvantage. According to Okeke (2020) and Mensah (2019) Ghanaian law faculties introduce communication training at the start but fail to maintain consistent reinforcement throughout the program. Most Ghanaian law schools assess their students through essay examinations that evaluate theoretical knowledge but do not measure real-time communication abilities according to Asare and Osei (2020). GIMPA Law School provides legal writing and moot court sessions but these opportunities remain inaccessible to certain students because of scheduling issues and selection requirements and limited faculty involvement.

The feedback process lacks structure and occurs at an extended period following the learning activity without proper organization. The existing problems generate a mismatch between what students require and what educational institutions provide. Students understand the importance of improving their oral advocacy abilities yet they lack proper curricular pathways to achieve this development. The existing gap between academic knowledge and professional readiness threatens

to produce graduates who excel in academics but lack essential professional competencies. The fundamental educational goal of legal training faces degradation because of unaddressed knowledge gaps which extend beyond theoretical learning to include practical competence development and self-assurance building.

2.3 Theoretical Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on three key communication and learning theories: Rhetorical Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory. These frameworks provide a multidimensional understanding of why and how strategic communication skills are essential for legal education and practice.

2.3.1 Rhetorical Theory

Rhetorical Theory, traced back to Aristotle, focuses on the art of persuasion. According to Aristotle, effective communication is achieved through three core elements: ethos (credibility of the speaker), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning) (Perritt, 2020). In the legal context, this theory is highly relevant because lawyers must not only present sound legal arguments (logos) but also establish their credibility before clients and courts (ethos) and appeal to the emotions or values of their audiences (pathos).

Globally, rhetorical training is a cornerstone of legal education, particularly in moot courts, oral arguments, and legal writing (Evans & Webb, 2015). It teaches students how to adapt arguments to diverse audiences from judges to juries to clients and to deploy persuasive strategies that can influence outcomes (Leggett & James, 2014). In Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana, where oral advocacy plays a dominant role in litigation, rhetorical competence is especially critical (Mensah, 2019). However, while rhetorical theory underpins many advocacy exercises, students may not always receive explicit instruction on the theory itself, resulting in a fragmented understanding of persuasive communication.

Integrating rhetorical principles systematically into legal education can help students become more deliberate and reflective about their communication choices. For instance, it can teach them to

balance emotional appeals with logical arguments or to tailor their tone and style depending on whether they are addressing a client, a judge, or the media (Perritt, 2020).

2.3.2 Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), developed by Howard Giles in the 1970s, explains how individuals adjust their communication styles to converge toward or diverge away from their interlocutors, depending on social and relational goals (Giles, 1973; Smith & Jones, 2021). In professional settings, including law, this theory is crucial because it emphasizes adaptability the ability to modify speech, tone, language, and behavior according to the audience.

For law students, CAT is directly applicable in client counseling, courtroom advocacy, negotiation, and even media interviews. A lawyer explaining complex legal concepts to a lay client must simplify jargon and adopt a more conversational tone (convergence), whereas that same lawyer may use formal, technical language when drafting legal documents or making court submissions (divergence) (Smith & Jones, 2021). Understanding accommodation helps students recognize the importance of flexibility, empathy, and audience awareness in legal communication.

In the Ghanaian legal setting, where lawyers interact with diverse populations from rural clients to high-ranking officials CAT provides a valuable framework for developing culturally sensitive and audience-specific communication strategies (Mensah, 2019). Without such adaptability, even technically correct legal advice can fail to achieve its intended impact.

2.3.3 Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by David Kolb (1984), argues that learning is most effective when individuals engage in a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In other words, students learn best not just by listening or reading but by doing, reflecting on their experience, generalizing principles, and applying them in new contexts.

Legal education worldwide has increasingly adopted experiential approaches, such as clinical programs, mock trials, role plays, and legal writing workshops, to build communication competencies (Evans & Webb, 2015; ABA, 2018). Kolb's theory supports the idea that students

need opportunities to practice communication in realistic settings, receive feedback, reflect on their performance, and refine their skills over time.

In the Ghanaian context, Experiential Learning Theory is particularly relevant as many students lack access to internships or clerkships where they can practice their communication skills in real-world settings (Asare & Osei, 2018). Integrating more experiential learning opportunities within the law school curriculum such as client counseling simulations, negotiation exercises, and media engagement workshops can help bridge this gap (Mensah, 2019).

2.3.4 Summary of Theoretical Contributions

Collectively, Rhetorical Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the development and application of strategic communication skills among law students. While rhetorical theory focuses on the elements of persuasion, CAT highlights the importance of adaptability, and ELT emphasizes hands-on, reflective learning. Together, these theories inform both the analysis of current gaps in communication training and the design of effective curricular interventions at GIMPA Law School.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the relationship between strategic communication training in legal education and the professional competency of law students. It integrates insights from the theoretical review particularly Rhetorical Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory to explain how communication training influences law students' preparedness for legal practice.

At the center of the framework is the independent variable:

Strategic communication training.

This includes all formal and informal activities within the law school curriculum aimed at building students' communication skills. Examples include legal writing courses, moot court exercises, negotiation simulations, client counseling workshops, media training, and structured feedback mechanisms.

The framework identifies two key categories of intervening (or mediating) variables:

Student and faculty perceptions:

Students' beliefs about the importance of communication skills in their legal careers.

Faculty members' prioritization of communication in teaching and assessment.

Exposure to experiential learning opportunities:

Participation in practical activities like moot court, clinical programs, or role plays.

Access to meaningful, structured feedback on communication performance.

These intervening factors influence how effectively students engage with communication training and develop their skills.

The dependent variable in the framework is:

Professional communication competency among law students.

This includes the ability to:

Present persuasive oral arguments (oral advocacy).

Write clear and precise legal documents (legal writing).

Negotiate effectively with clients or opposing counsel (negotiation).

Communicate empathetically and accessibly with clients (client counseling).

Adjust communication styles across audiences (communication accommodation).

The framework hypothesizes that increased and well-integrated communication training leads to enhanced professional competency, provided that student perceptions are positive, experiential opportunities are available, and feedback mechanisms are in place.

Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Relevance of Strategic Communication Skills for Law Students



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The methodology provides the framework that guides how data are gathered, analyzed, and interpreted in relation to the research questions. This study employed a quantitative research approach within a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to produce objective and generalizable findings. The cross-sectional survey design is appropriate because it allows data to be collected at a single point in time, making it suitable for assessing the awareness, integration, prioritization, and perceived gaps in communication skills among students. This design minimizes cost and time while maximizing the breadth of information gathered.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. This design was chosen because it is suitable for obtaining an overall picture of the variables under study without manipulating the environment. The descriptive element focuses on assessing the current state of students' awareness and perceptions regarding communication training, while the cross-sectional nature enables a snapshot of multiple student groups at once. This approach allows for both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, facilitating not only the identification of patterns and trends but also the testing of relationships among variables. The design reduces researcher bias since it relies on standardized questionnaires administered to a broad group of respondents, though one potential limitation is that causality cannot be inferred due to the absence of temporal sequencing.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised all law students enrolled at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) Law School during the 2024/2025 academic year. This

included undergraduate Bachelor of Laws (LLB) students across all levels (first, second, and third year) and postgraduate Master of Laws (LLM) students.

According to GIMPA Law School records, the total student population was approximately **1,200**, consisting of about 1,100 LLB and 100 LLM students. This population formed the sampling frame for the study.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, with an additional 10% added to cater for non-responses. This ensured that the final sample was representative of the student body while minimizing selection bias.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (65,000)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting into the formula:

$$n = \frac{1200}{1+1200(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{3.5}$$

$$n=300$$

To account for a possible 10% non-response rate, the adjusted sample size is:

$$10\% \text{ of } 300 = 30$$

$$200+30=330$$

Hence, a total sample size of 330 students is estimated for the study out of the total student population which is approximately 1,200. This adjustment strengthens statistical reliability and minimizes sampling error.

Sample Size Distribution by Programme & Level

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution

Programme	Level	Allocated Sample (n)	Share of Total (%)
Day	100	36	10.9%
Day	200	36	10.9%
Day	300	35	10.6%
Day	400	35	10.6%
Evening	100	59	17.9%
Evening	200	59	17.9%
Evening	300	58	17.6%
LLM	Postgraduate	12	3.3%
Total		330	100%

3.4 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed. The student body was stratified according to academic levels (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and postgraduate), ensuring that each group was adequately represented. Within each stratum, respondents were randomly selected using simple random sampling. This approach minimizes selection bias by giving each student an equal chance of being chosen, while stratification enhances representativeness across the different categories.

However, it is acknowledged that some degree of bias may arise if certain students (e.g., those absent during distribution or those less inclined to participate) are underrepresented. To mitigate

this, questionnaires were also shared electronically to maximize participation and reach students who may not have been available during physical administration.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from institutional records, policy documents, and previous studies related to communication in legal education. These materials provided contextual understanding and guided the refinement of questionnaire items to ensure alignment with existing literature and institutional realities.

3.5.2 Primary Data

Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire captured students' socio-demographic information, awareness of strategic communication, integration of communication training, valued communication skills, and perceived gaps. Both printed and online versions were distributed to maximize response rates and ensure inclusion of students across all levels and schedules.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected both physically and electronically to maximize coverage and participation. Printed questionnaires were distributed during class sessions, while an online Google Form was circulated through student email groups and WhatsApp platforms. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

To minimize bias, instructions were standardized, and data collectors were trained to avoid influencing responses. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire without pressure. Completed responses were checked for completeness before entry into SPSS for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

Data collected were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was divided into descriptive and inferential statistics:

3.7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize socio-demographic variables and responses to the main research questions. Graphical representations such as bar charts and pie charts were used for clarity and better interpretation.

3.7.2 Inferential Statistics

Chi-square tests were used to assess associations between categorical variables (e.g., year of study and awareness of communication skills). Logistic regression analysis was employed to predict factors influencing high awareness or positive perceptions of communication training. A 95% confidence interval and a significance level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) were adopted to determine statistical significance.

3.8 Statistical Assumptions and Justification

Prior to analysis, data were checked for missing values, outliers, and normality. Reliability of scales was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, while multicollinearity diagnostics were performed before running logistic regression. For Chi-square tests, the assumption that at least 80% of cells should have an expected frequency of ≥ 5 was observed. For logistic regression, assumptions of linearity of the logit and absence of multicollinearity were also tested. Meeting these assumptions ensured the validity and robustness of the results.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the GIMPA Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Respondents were provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study. Participation was voluntary, and students had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring no identifying information was collected, and data were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

Bias was minimized by ensuring neutrality in questionnaire wording and administration. Nevertheless, potential bias from self-reported data was acknowledged, as some respondents may have provided socially desirable answers. To reduce this, respondents were assured that their anonymity was guaranteed and that the study was purely for academic purposes.

3.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology employed to assess the awareness, integration, prioritization, and perceived gaps in strategic communication skills among GIMPA law students. It discussed the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, statistical assumptions, and ethical considerations. By adopting a quantitative survey approach with robust sampling and analytical strategies, the study ensures reliability and validity while minimizing bias. The next chapter presents the results and analysis of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The majority of respondents (61.5 %) were aged 18–27 years, consistent with the youthful profile of undergraduate law students. Females (60 %) outnumbered males (40 %), indicating the growing participation of women in legal education.

More than half (53.3 %) were enrolled in the Evening Programme, while 43 % attended Day sessions and 3.7 % pursued the LLM programme. By year of study, both first- and second-year LLB students constituted 28.8 % each, followed closely by third-year students (28.2 %), and a small postgraduate segment (3.3 %).

Most participants (83 %) were single, while 14.5 % were married. Employment patterns showed that 55.5 % were not employed, 30 % combined studies with part-time jobs, and 14.5 % held full-time positions. These demographics suggest a predominantly young, female-dominated student population with many balancing work and study commitments, factors that may influence exposure to communication training and programme participation.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Age Group		
18–27	203	61.5
28–37	94	28.5
38–48	33	10.0
Sex		
Male	132	40.0
Female	198	60.0
Programme		
Day Programme	142	43.0
Evening Programme	176	53.3
LLM (Postgraduate)	12	3.7
Year of Study		
1st Year LLB	95	28.8
2nd Year LLB	95	28.8
3rd Year LLB	93	28.2

Postgraduate (LLM)	12	3.3
Marital Status		
Single	274	83.0
Married	48	14.5
Divorced	5	1.5
Widowed	3	0.9
Employment Status		
Not employed	183	55.5
Part-time	99	30.0
Full-time	48	14.5

4.1.2 Awareness of Strategic Communication

The findings in Table 2 reveal that the majority of law students (80 %) had heard of strategic communication in their legal studies, while only one-fifth (20 %) indicated no prior awareness of the concept. In terms of intensity, 35.2 % rated their awareness as moderate and 30 % as high, whereas 20.7 % described it as low or very low. This suggests that although most students have encountered the term, depth of understanding varies considerably across the population.

Students overwhelmingly recognized the importance of communication skills to legal success; nearly two-thirds (64.5 %) rated these skills as very or extremely important, and 63.4 % agreed that communication is as vital as doctrinal knowledge. Likewise, 70 % expressed willingness to attend optional workshops, underscoring strong motivation to enhance such competencies. Roughly 40 % also strongly agreed that graduates without strong communication abilities are at a professional disadvantage.

As shown in Table 2a, lecturers and course outlines (64.5 %) were the primary sources of information, followed by peers and WhatsApp networks (55.8 %), and official institutional notices (50.3 %). The prevalence of informal and lecturer-led channels points to both top-down and peer-driven diffusion of awareness.

Composite analysis (Fig 1) further indicates that 44.8 % of respondents exhibited moderate awareness while 34.9 % demonstrated high awareness, leaving 20.3 % in the low category.

Table 3: Awareness of Strategic Communication among Law Students

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Heard of “Strategic Communication” in law studies		
Yes	264	80.0
No	66	20.0
Rate of awareness of the concept		
Very low	18	5.5
Low	50	15.2
Moderate	116	35.2
High	99	30.0
Very high	47	14.2
Importance of communication skills for success in law		
Not important	7	2.1
Slightly important	27	8.2
Moderately important	83	25.2
Very important	132	40.0
Extremely important	81	24.5
Communication is as important as doctrinal knowledge		
Strongly disagree	16	4.8
Disagree	29	8.8
Neutral	76	23.0
Agree	117	35.5
Strongly agree	92	27.9
Communication is explicitly discussed in classes		
Yes	214	64.8
No	116	35.2
Law graduates without communication skills face disadvantage		
Strongly disagree	13	3.9
Disagree	20	6.1
Neutral	66	20.0
Agree	132	40.0
Strongly agree	99	30.0
Source of information on strategic communication (multiple response)		
Lecturer / Course outline	213	64.5
Notice boards / Official email	166	50.3
Student association platforms	131	39.7
Peers / WhatsApp groups	184	55.8
Website / Handbook	145	43.9
Other (specify)	29	8.8
Contribution of communication to employability		
Not at all	10	3.0
Slightly	22	6.7
Moderate	82	24.8
Significant	132	40.0
Extremely	84	25.5

Lecturers emphasize communication as a learning outcome		
Yes	181	54.8
No	149	45.2
Confidence in explaining the concept of “strategic communication”		
Not confident	26	7.9
Slightly confident	56	17.0
Moderately confident	132	40.0
Very confident	116	35.1
Stage at which awareness should start		
1st year	182	55.2
2nd year	83	25.2
3rd year	49	14.8
Postgraduate	16	4.8
Communication skills are transferable beyond law practice		
Strongly disagree	10	3.0
Disagree	22	6.7
Neutral	73	22.1
Agree	126	38.2
Strongly agree	99	30.0
Would attend optional communication workshops		
Yes	231	70.0
No	99	30.0

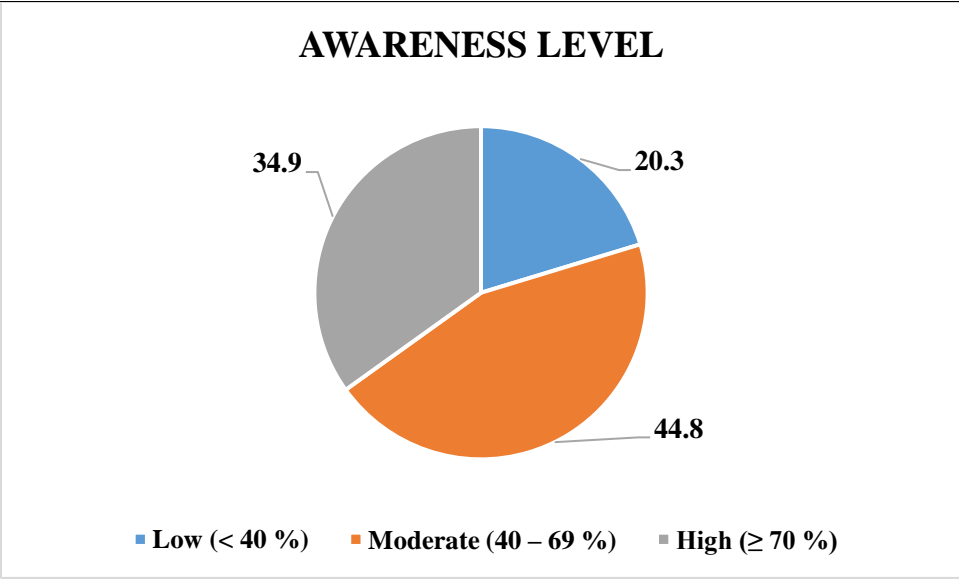


Figure 2: Overall Awareness level of respondents

4.1.3 Integration of Communication into the Curriculum

The findings in Table 3 indicate that integration of communication into the law curriculum at GIMPA is moderately achieved, though still uneven across activities and levels. Results show that the majority of respondents (64.8 %) described communication training as optional and inconsistent, while only 25.2 % viewed it as compulsory and structured, and 10 % believed it was not present at all. This reflects limited institutional uniformity in how communication is embedded within law courses.

When asked to rate integration quality, 40 % considered it average, 27.9 % good, and 6.9 % excellent, whereas 25.2 % rated it poor or very poor. The composite index (Fig 2) further confirms that 47.6 % of students fell within the moderate integration tier, while 26.3 % reported high integration and 26.1 % low integration. Thus, nearly three-quarters of the respondents recognized at least some degree of integration in their curriculum.

Participation in communication-related activities reinforces this pattern. The most frequently experienced activities were legal writing sessions (80 %), moot court (64.8 %), and research or writing workshops (60 %). Engagement in client counselling (40 %) and debate clubs (45.2 %) was lower, while 10 % had never participated in any such activity. Approximately 55.2 % of students confirmed that lecturers provided adequate feedback, and 62.1 % believed these activities contributed positively to their academic performance.

Although half of respondents felt communication activities were fairly distributed across levels, others perceived disparities particularly between day and evening cohorts. Preferred delivery methods further emphasize students' appetite for formalization: over half (55.2 %) desired integration within mainstream courses, while a quarter preferred workshops and 14.8 % opted for extracurricular modes.

Table 4: Integration of Communication into the Curriculum

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
C1. Communication-related activities experienced		
Legal writing	264	80.0
Moot court	214	64.8
Client counselling	132	40.0
Debate clubs	149	45.2
Research workshops	198	60.0
None	33	10.0
C2. Frequency of communication activities in coursework		
Rarely	83	25.2
Sometimes	149	45.2
Often	82	24.8
Always	16	4.8
C3. Nature of communication training at GIMPA		
Compulsory and structured	83	25.2
Optional and inconsistent	214	64.8
Not present	33	10.0
C4. Rating of integration of communication into curriculum		
Very poor	27	8.2
Poor	56	17.0
Average	132	40.0
Good	92	27.9
Excellent	23	6.9
C5. Adequate feedback received from lecturers		
Yes	182	55.2
No	148	44.8
C6. Training compared to expectations		
Much worse	20	6.1
Worse	46	13.9
As expected	149	45.2
Better	83	25.2
Much better	32	9.7
C7. Fair distribution of communication activities across levels		
Yes	165	50.0
No	165	50.0
C8. Contribution of sessions to learning outcomes		
Not at all	13	3.9
Slightly	33	10.0
Moderate	119	36.1
Significant	112	33.9
Extremely	53	16.1
C9. Frequency of oral presentations per semester		
Never	50	15.2
Once per semester	116	35.2
Two to three times	116	35.2
Regularly	48	14.5

C10. Preferred delivery method for communication training		
Integrated into courses	182	55.2
Workshops	83	25.2
Extracurricular	49	14.8
Other (specify)	16	4.8
C11. Communication activities are graded		
Yes	191	57.9
No	139	42.1
C12. Communication activities influence academic performance		
Yes	205	62.1
No	125	37.9

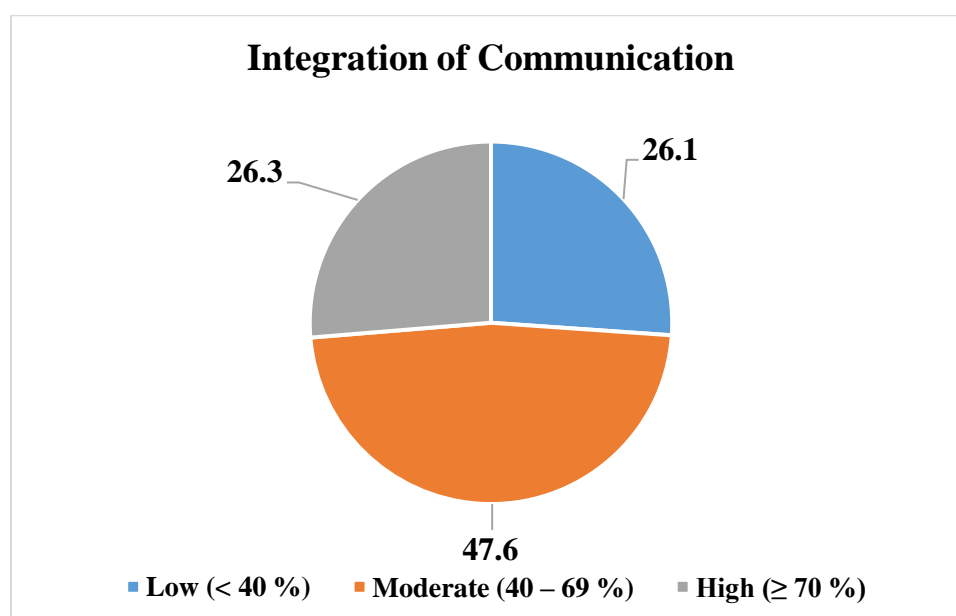


Figure 3: Integration of Communication into the Curriculum

4.1.4 Communication Skills Students Consider Most Important

The findings presented in Table 4 show that law students place the greatest emphasis on legal writing (40.0 %) and oral advocacy (34.8 %) as the most essential communication skills for legal practice. Fewer respondents selected negotiation (13.0 %), client counselling (7.9 %), and public speaking (4.3 %) as their top priority. These results highlight that students strongly associate professional success with writing precision and courtroom expression two central competencies in legal education and practice.

Supporting this, the mean ranking scores revealed that legal writing (mean = 1.9) and oral advocacy (mean = 2.1) were consistently ranked first and second, followed by negotiation (3.4) and client counselling (3.7). This aligns with the academic focus of the programme, which emphasizes argumentative writing and litigation-oriented training.

Students' self-assessment (Table 4a) further shows that 35.8 % identified legal writing as their strongest skill, followed by oral advocacy (27.9 %), while 37.6 % mentioned public speaking and confidence as their weakest area requiring improvement. This reinforces the idea that while written and advocacy-based communication are relatively well developed, verbal confidence and negotiation skills remain underemphasized.

Motivation to improve communication skills was remarkably high 56.1 % reported being highly motivated, and 30 % were moderately motivated. Additionally, 63.9 % regarded teamwork as very important, and 64.8 % preferred peer assessment, suggesting a strong appetite for interactive, practice-based learning approaches.

The composite skill priority index (Fig 3) indicated that 40.9 % of students exhibited high prioritization, 43.0 % moderate, and 16.1 % low.

Table 5: Communication Skills Students Consider Most Important

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
D1. Skill considered most important		
Oral advocacy	115	34.8
Legal writing	132	40.0
Negotiation	43	13.0
Client counselling	26	7.9
Public speaking	14	4.3
D2. Rank of communication skills (1–5)		
Legal writing	mean rank 1.9	
Oral advocacy	mean rank 2.1	
Negotiation	mean rank 3.4	
Client counselling	mean rank 3.7	
Public speaking	mean rank 3.9	
D3. Strongest communication skill (open-ended, summarized)		
Legal writing	118	35.8
Oral advocacy / presentation	92	27.9
Negotiation and persuasion	46	13.9
Client interaction / teamwork	33	10.0
Public speaking confidence	25	7.6
Other (unspecified)	16	4.8

D4. Skill needing most improvement (open-ended, summarized)		
Public speaking / confidence	124	37.6
Legal writing clarity	79	23.9
Negotiation skills	53	16.1
Client counselling	39	11.8
Oral advocacy technique	35	10.6
D5. Employers value communication as much as academics		
Strongly disagree	20	6.1
Disagree	29	8.8
Neutral	83	25.2
Agree	132	40.0
Strongly agree	66	20.0
D6. Oral advocacy is essential for litigation		
Strongly disagree	13	3.9
Disagree	20	6.1
Neutral	43	13.0
Agree	148	44.8
Strongly agree	106	32.1
D7. Negotiation/client counselling crucial for corporate law		
Strongly disagree	7	2.1
Disagree	16	4.8
Neutral	73	22.1
Agree	140	42.4
Strongly agree	94	28.6
D8. Motivation to improve communication skills		
Not motivated	13	3.9
Slightly motivated	33	10.0
Moderately motivated	99	30.0
Highly motivated	185	56.1
D9. Practice communication outside class		
Never	26	7.9
Rarely	43	13.0
Sometimes	132	40.0
Often	86	26.1
Always	43	13.0
D11. Importance of teamwork in communication training		
Not important	10	3.0
Slightly important	23	7.0
Moderately important	86	26.1
Very important	211	63.9
D12. Preference for peer assessment in communication activities		
Yes	214	64.8
No	116	35.2

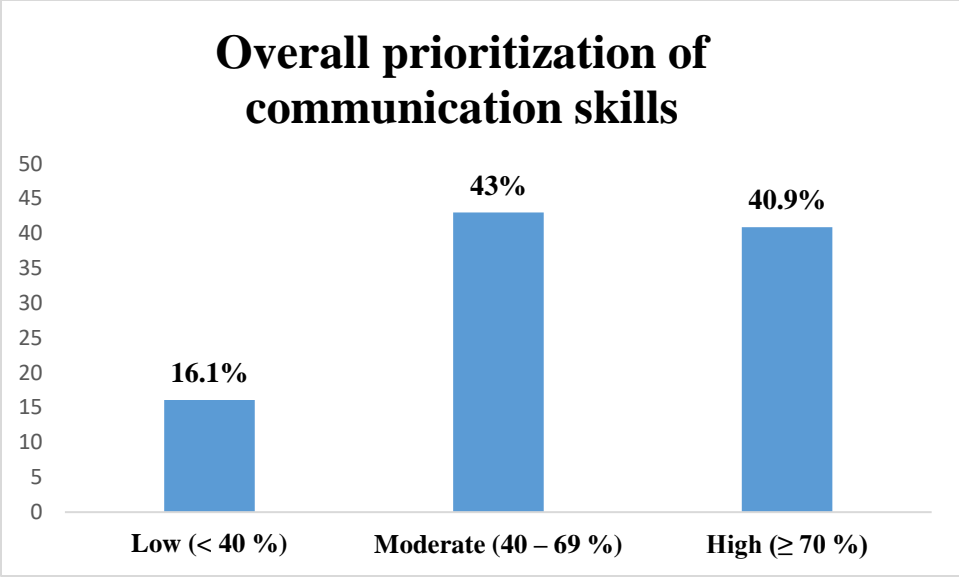


Figure 4: Overall prioritization of communication skills

4.1.5 Perceived Gaps and Challenges

The findings in Table 5 reveal several persistent gaps and challenges affecting the effective integration of communication training into the GIMPA Law curriculum. More than half of the respondents (54.8 %) stated that there were not enough opportunities for communication training, indicating limited access or irregular scheduling of such sessions. Among those who perceived gaps, the dominant challenges identified were limited opportunities for practice (55.2 %), insufficient feedback from lecturers (45.2 %), and optional-only activities (40.0 %). Smaller yet notable proportions mentioned poor alignment with real-world legal practice (35.2 %) and lack of qualified communication faculty (34.8 %) as additional concerns.

Students’ satisfaction levels were moderate: while 27.9 % were satisfied and 13 % very satisfied, a combined 33.9 % expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting considerable room for improvement. Similarly, only 25.8 % felt their expectations were fully or significantly met, and 60 % believed that some students had more access to communication opportunities than others an indication of inequity across class levels or programme streams.

As shown in the table, the most frequently suggested improvement strategies were to make communication training more compulsory and structured (55.2 %), introduce dedicated modules (47.6 %), and provide increased feedback opportunities (50.0 %). Students also emphasized the

value of guest workshops (42.4 %) and expanded moot court sessions (35.2 %) to improve experiential learning. Encouragingly, an overwhelming majority (84.8 %) supported annual curriculum review to keep communication training relevant and up to professional standards.

Table 6: Perceived Gaps and Challenges in Communication Training

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Enough opportunities for communication training		
Yes	149	45.2
No	181	54.8
If No, what challenges are faced?		
Limited opportunities	182	55.2
Optional-only activities	132	40.0
Lack of qualified faculty	115	34.8
Insufficient feedback	149	45.2
Poor alignment with legal practice	116	35.2
Other challenges (resource or space)	43	13.0
Satisfaction with available communication training		
Very dissatisfied	33	10.0
Dissatisfied	79	23.9
Neutral	83	25.2
Satisfied	92	27.9
Very satisfied	43	13.0
Extent to which expectations are met		
Not at all	36	10.9
Slightly	69	20.9
Moderately	140	42.4
Significantly	66	20.0
Fully	19	5.8
Some students have more access than others		
Yes	198	60.0
No	132	40.0
Biggest gap in communication training		
Oral advocacy	92	27.9
Legal writing	66	20.0
Negotiation	43	13.0
Client counselling	56	17.0
Feedback from lecturers	73	22.1
Communication activities assessed fairly		
Yes	181	54.8
No	149	45.2
Improvements needed in communication training		
More compulsory sessions	182	55.2
Dedicated communication modules	157	47.6
More feedback opportunities	165	50.0
Guest speaker workshops	140	42.4
Expanded moot court sessions	116	35.2
Gaps in training affect readiness for legal practice		
Strongly disagree	13	3.9

Disagree	27	8.2
Neutral	73	22.1
Agree	140	42.4
Strongly agree	77	23.3
Ever skipped communication activities because optional		
Yes	165	50.0
No	165	50.0
Training should be reviewed annually		
Yes	280	84.8
No	50	15.2
Commonly reported barriers to effective communication training*		
Limited opportunities for participation	182	55.2
Optional-only communication activities	132	40.0
Insufficient feedback from lecturers	149	45.2
Lack of qualified communication faculty	115	34.8
Poor alignment with legal practice	116	35.2
Inadequate facilities or resources	43	13.0
Suggested improvements to strengthen training*		
More compulsory and structured sessions	182	55.2
Dedicated communication modules	157	47.6
Increased feedback opportunities	165	50.0
Guest speaker or practitioner workshops	140	42.4
Expanded moot court and debate sessions	116	35.2

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Awareness of Strategic Communication

The finding that 80 percent of students reported having heard of strategic communication and that approximately 34.9 percent demonstrated a high awareness tier indicates a generally positive level of familiarity among GIMPA law students. However, the presence of about one fifth of respondents in the low awareness category suggests that understanding of the concept is not yet universal. This result agrees with global evidence that awareness of communication skills is necessary but not sufficient for professional competence in law and related disciplines. Cantatore, McQuoid-Mason, Geldres, and Guajardo-Puga (2021) observed that experiential clinical work such as pro bono clinics significantly enhances both awareness and employability among law students in Australia, South Africa, and Chile, supporting the notion that practical engagement consolidates conceptual awareness.

The major sources of awareness identified in this study were lecturers and course outlines representing 64.5 percent and peer interactions through WhatsApp and informal discussions representing 55.8 percent. These findings are consistent with international research that shows communication competence is developed through both formal and informal learning channels. Al Asefer (2021) emphasized that communication and soft-skill acquisition often occur outside doctrinal teaching and are central to employer expectations of graduates. Similarly, Boakye (2023) reported that in Ghanaian tertiary institutions, communication skills remain an essential component of employability, particularly when students are exposed to interactive and problem-solving learning environments that encourage expression, negotiation, and collaboration.

The variation in awareness levels observed among the respondents may reflect inconsistencies in when and how communication concepts are introduced within the law curriculum. More than half of the students, representing 55.2 percent, indicated that communication awareness should begin in the first year of study. This supports the view expressed by Canto-Lopez (2025) that early introduction of communication skill training in professional education improves long-term retention and practical application. Embedding communication topics early and reinforcing them throughout the programme can therefore promote deeper understanding and reduce disparities in awareness across cohorts.

The findings suggest that awareness of strategic communication is widespread but uneven. Sustained reinforcement through formal instruction, peer collaboration, and extracurricular exposure will be vital to ensure comprehensive understanding. The results align with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for quality education and relevant skills for employability. Indirectly, strengthening communication awareness among future legal professionals contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3, particularly Target 3.1, by empowering them to advocate effectively for health, social, and human rights issues that influence well-being.

4.2.2 Integration of Communication into the Curriculum

The findings indicate that integration of communication training in the law curriculum is moderate. Most students viewed the training as optional and inconsistent, while a smaller portion described it as compulsory and structured. Ratings clustered around average and good, with nearly half of respondents falling into the moderate integration tier. This outcome mirrors broader trends

reported in legal education literature, where partial integration of communication learning activities limits the holistic development of advocacy and writing competencies (Salameh, 2023).

Participation data further reveal that the most common activities were legal writing, moot court, and research workshops, while engagement in client counselling and debate was comparatively lower. Similar observations were made by Kato Bukenya (2025), who found that African law schools often emphasize written advocacy over interpersonal and negotiation skills. This uneven exposure suggests that students experience communication primarily in academic rather than practical or collaborative contexts.

The study also highlighted inconsistency in the provision of feedback, as only about half of respondents confirmed receiving adequate guidance from lecturers. Feedback has been shown to be a key determinant of motivation, self-regulation, and sustained performance in higher education. Williams (2024) reported that timely and dialogic feedback promotes significant gains in students' confidence and accuracy in legal writing tasks. Likewise, Fleckenstein (2023) demonstrated that technology-assisted feedback mechanisms can produce measurable improvements in academic writing quality. These findings suggest that enhancing feedback systems could meaningfully strengthen communication learning outcomes in the GIMPA Law programme.

Employability remains a central theme in this discussion. Research across multiple jurisdictions shows that employers increasingly demand strong communication and teamwork skills in addition to doctrinal knowledge (Salameh, 2023). Kato Bukenya (2025) argues that embedding structured communication modules within professional curricula is essential for producing practice-ready graduates who can engage clients effectively. This argument aligns closely with the present findings, which show that students value communication competence but perceive a need for more structured and graded integration.

Collectively, the evidence points to three key implications. First, communication activities should be systematically mapped across all years with clear learning outcomes, assessment rubrics, and minimum participation requirements (Salameh, 2023). Second, institutions should strengthen feedback mechanisms through interactive and technology-supported platforms to ensure consistent

formative assessment (Williams, 2024; Fleckenstein, 2023). Third, collaboration with professional bodies and employers can help align course activities with real practice expectations, thereby enhancing the employability of graduates (Kato Bukenya, 2025).

Ultimately, these improvements advance Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education by ensuring that all learners acquire relevant skills for decent work, and they indirectly contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 3 by preparing future legal practitioners to communicate effectively on matters relating to health, rights, and social justice.

4.2.3 Communication Skills Students Consider Most Important

The findings revealed that students placed the greatest emphasis on *legal writing* and *oral advocacy* as the most essential communication skills in legal education. This outcome is consistent with international research showing that writing precision and persuasive oral presentation are central to professional identity and credibility in the legal field (Chong & Ng, 2022). Although negotiation, client counselling, and public speaking were acknowledged as important, they ranked considerably lower in perceived importance. These results highlight that law students continue to associate communication competence with traditional advocacy rather than the broader interpersonal and negotiation contexts that dominate modern legal practice.

This tendency has been reported in other studies on legal education reform. For example, Cantatore and Lim (2021) observed that many law schools prioritize litigation and academic writing skills while offering limited experiential exposure to client interaction and dispute resolution. Similarly, De La Rosa (2023) emphasized that graduates who excel in written analysis often struggle with collaborative communication and cross-disciplinary negotiation, which are increasingly valued in international and corporate law environments. These findings support the interpretation that while students appreciate the importance of communication, their training environment shapes what they consider to be most critical.

In the present study, more than half of respondents described themselves as *highly motivated* to improve their communication skills, and a large proportion supported peer-assessment and teamwork as beneficial methods for learning. This aligns with the findings of Fraser, Frawley, and Gordon (2020), who demonstrated that peer interaction and collaborative assessment significantly

enhance reflective communication and self-confidence among law students. Motivation also appears to be linked to perceived employability: research from Africa and Asia shows that students who perceive strong links between communication ability and job prospects are more committed to developing these competencies (Ismail & Yusoff, 2023).

The composite skill priority index revealed that approximately 41 percent of students had high prioritization scores, indicating a clear understanding of the relevance of communication to professional success. However, about 16 percent exhibited low prioritization, echoing earlier findings of uneven awareness and integration. Bridging this gap requires not only greater curricular emphasis but also deliberate teaching of non-litigation communication forms such as client interviewing, negotiation, and digital advocacy. Scholars such as Reddy and Kumari (2024) have argued that integrating simulation-based exercises and technology-enhanced practice into law programmes equips graduates with the agility to adapt communication strategies across contexts.

These results emphasize the need for a balanced curriculum that promotes written, oral, and interpersonal communication equally. As the Ghanaian legal market evolves toward globalized and client-centric practice, institutions must ensure that graduates can communicate effectively across diverse audiences. Such comprehensive skill development directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 by enhancing the relevance of tertiary education to labour market needs and indirectly contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3, which promotes social well-being through effective advocacy and access to justice.

4.2.4 Perceived Gaps and Challenges in Communication Training

The results revealed that more than half of the respondents believed there were not enough opportunities for communication training within the GIMPA Law curriculum. Students cited limited practice sessions, inconsistent implementation, and insufficient feedback as the most pressing challenges. These findings align with global concerns that legal education continues to rely heavily on lecture-based delivery, with limited experiential engagement that allows students to apply communication skills in real contexts (Salameh, 2023). Inadequate opportunities for active participation often translate into weaker confidence, slower skill development, and reduced employability potential (Kramer, 2020).

A related challenge identified in this study was the lack of structured feedback mechanisms. Students reported that assessment of communication activities was often subjective or infrequent, which limited their ability to improve. Feedback quality is a recurrent theme in higher education literature. Williams (2024) noted that clear, timely, and dialogic feedback enhances motivation and encourages learners to internalize performance standards. Likewise, research on law students' writing and advocacy performance found that feedback consistency is directly linked to skill mastery and reflective learning (Osman & Rahman, 2021). The absence of structured feedback in communication training therefore perpetuates a cycle where students are aware of their deficiencies but lack guidance for improvement.

The perception that some students had more access to communication activities than others also reflects a structural inequity within the training system. Similar disparities were reported by Cantatore et al. (2021), who observed that students from evening or part-time programmes often had fewer opportunities for experiential learning due to schedule constraints and reduced access to faculty support. Addressing such inequities requires institutional commitment to standardized curricular delivery and equitable resourcing across all streams.

Student satisfaction levels, though moderate, highlight the need for programme review and modernization. Several respondents advocated for the introduction of dedicated modules, compulsory participation, and annual curriculum evaluation. These recommendations are consistent with best practices proposed by Chong and Ng (2022), who found that embedding mandatory communication courses and continuous assessment leads to improved learning outcomes and stronger graduate readiness. Furthermore, a study by Muriithi (2023) on Kenyan legal education reform demonstrated that periodic curriculum reviews that incorporate stakeholder input foster adaptability and relevance in professional programmes.

Collectively, the gaps identified in this study point to systemic rather than individual shortcomings. Enhancing training quality requires institutional reforms that include the integration of structured communication modules, consistent evaluation, and equitable access across all programmes. Implementing guest workshops, moot court expansion, and technology-supported training can further strengthen student engagement. Such reforms are not only aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes quality education and relevant skills for decent work, but

also advance Sustainable Development Goal 3 by preparing future legal professionals to advocate effectively for health, rights, and justice, thereby contributing to societal well-being.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how law students at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) perceive and engage with strategic communication skills as part of their legal education. The findings revealed that although awareness of the importance of communication was generally high, the level of understanding and application varied considerably across student groups. Most students acknowledged that communication skills are as essential as legal knowledge, yet many lacked consistent opportunities to develop these competencies within a structured curriculum.

Integration of communication training into the GIMPA Law School curriculum was found to be moderate and fragmented. While components such as legal writing and moot court exercises exist, they are often optional and unevenly implemented. Feedback systems were weak, and assessment criteria for communication tasks were inconsistent. As a result, students' exposure to essential communication skills such as oral advocacy, negotiation, and client counselling remains limited and dependent on personal initiative rather than institutional design.

The study further established that students prioritize legal writing and oral advocacy as the most critical skills for professional success, though the broader aspects of strategic communication, including teamwork and adaptability, are underemphasized. Limited practice opportunities, insufficient qualified faculty, and poor alignment with real-world legal practice were identified as major gaps.

In conclusion, while GIMPA Law School has made strides toward incorporating communication into legal education, efforts remain insufficiently structured and equitably accessible. To align with international standards and Ghana's evolving legal landscape, communication should be repositioned as a core professional competency rather than a supplementary skill. Strengthening integration, feedback, and practice opportunities will not only enhance graduate employability but also contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 3 on societal well-being through effective advocacy and professional excellence.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that GIMPA Law School institutionalize comprehensive communication-focused modules within its academic curriculum. The results indicate that communication skills such as legal writing, oral advocacy, client counselling, negotiation, and public speaking are valued by students yet inconsistently taught or practiced. Making communication-related courses compulsory, rather than optional, will ensure that all students receive a uniform foundation in these essential competencies. Integrating structured communication modules across various academic levels will further promote continuity, reduce disparities across cohorts, and strengthen students' readiness for legal practice.

The study also recommends that the Law School expand experiential learning opportunities. Participants highlighted limited practice environments and insufficient exposure to real-life communication scenarios. To address this, the School should strengthen activities such as moot courts, legal clinics, mock trials, and debate sessions, ensuring they are accessible to all students rather than a select group. These platforms should be systematically incorporated into the curriculum, supervised by trained faculty, and aligned with practical skills required in the legal profession. Increased experiential learning will help students apply communication theories in realistic settings and build confidence in advocacy-related tasks.

Another key recommendation is the enhancement of lecturer feedback mechanisms. Students reported inadequate structured feedback on communication assignments, which hinders their ability to improve. The School should adopt standardized feedback models that provide detailed, timely, and constructive comments on both written and oral communication tasks. Faculty development workshops could be organized to equip lecturers with techniques for assessing communication skills objectively and guiding students more effectively. Strengthening feedback processes will help students identify specific strengths and weaknesses and promote continuous skill development.

It is further recommended that the School conduct periodic curriculum reviews to ensure alignment with contemporary legal industry expectations. As the legal landscape evolves, communication demands also change. Regular curriculum evaluations, informed by student experiences and global best practices, will help identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Such reviews should be

undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders such as the General Legal Council, legal practitioners, alumni, and students. This collaborative approach will ensure that communication teaching remains relevant, responsive, and reflective of both academic and professional realities.

Finally, the School should improve resource accessibility by providing students with equal opportunities to participate in communication-enhancing activities. The study found disparities in access across cohorts. Establishing structured schedules, clear participation criteria, and adequate logistical support will help mitigate these inequalities. Ensuring that all students regardless of academic year, gender, or prior experience benefit equally from training opportunities will contribute to a fairer learning environment and a stronger overall communication culture within the institution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Data Collection Instrument (Questionnaire)

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a study on *“Strategic Communication Skills and Students: A Study of Law Students at GIMPA Law School.”* The aim is to assess students’ awareness, integration, importance, and gaps in communication training.

Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The information will be used strictly for academic purposes. Completing the questionnaire should take about 15 minutes.

Please indicate your consent below:

I agree to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Section A: Socio-Demographic Information

Code	Question	Response Options (with codes)
A1	Age(years)
A2	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Female (2)
A3	Year of Study	<input type="checkbox"/> 1st Year LLB (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Year LLB (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Year LLB (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate (4)
A4	Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Married (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed (4)

A5	Prior exposure to debate/public speaking/leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
A6	High school attended	<input type="checkbox"/> Public (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Private (2) <input type="checkbox"/> International (3)
A7	Previous training in communication before GIMPA	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
A8	If yes, specify	_____ (open-ended)
A9	Current employment status	<input type="checkbox"/> Not employed (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time (2)
A10	Participation in extracurricular communication activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

Section B: Awareness of Strategic Communication

Code	Question	Response Options (with codes)
B1	Heard of “strategic communication” in law studies?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
B2	Rate your awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Very low (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> High (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Very high (5)
B3	Importance of communication skills for success	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3)

		<input type="checkbox"/> Very (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely (5)
B4	Communication as important as doctrinal knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
B5	Communication explicitly discussed in classes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
B6	Law graduates without communication skills face disadvantage	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
B7	Contribution of communication to employability	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely (5)
B8	Lecturers emphasize communication as outcome	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
B9	Confidence in explaining “strategic communication”	<input type="checkbox"/> Not confident (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Very confident (4)
B10	When should awareness start?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1st year (1)

		<input type="checkbox"/> 2nd year (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd year (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate (4)
B11	Communication transferable beyond law	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
B12	Would attend optional workshops	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

Section C: Integration of Communication Training

Code	Question	Response Options (with codes)
C1	Which have you experienced?	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal writing (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Moot court (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Client counseling (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Debate clubs (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Research workshops (5) <input type="checkbox"/> None (0)
C2	Frequency of communication activities in coursework	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Often (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Always (4)
C3	Communication training at GIMPA is:	<input type="checkbox"/> Compulsory & structured (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Optional & inconsistent (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Not present (3)
C4	Rate integration of communication into curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> Very poor (1)

		<input type="checkbox"/> Poor (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Average (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Good (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent (5)
C5	Enough feedback from lecturers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
C6	Training compared to expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Much worse (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Worse (2) <input type="checkbox"/> As expected (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Better (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Much better (5)
C7	Are activities fairly distributed across levels?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
C8	Contribution of sessions to learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely (5)
C9	How often do you practice oral presentations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Once/semester (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 2–3 times/semester (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly (3)
C10	Preferred delivery method	<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated courses (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Extracurricular (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (4)

C11	Are communication activities graded?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
C12	Do they influence academic performance?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

Section D: Communication Skills Students Consider Most Important

Code	Question	Response Options (with codes)
D1	Which skill is most important?	<input type="checkbox"/> Oral advocacy (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Legal writing (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiation (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Client counseling (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Public speaking (5)
D2	Rank skills (1–5)	Oral advocacy ____ Legal writing ____ Negotiation ____ Client counseling ____ Public speaking ____
D3	Strongest skill	_____ (open-ended)
D4	Skill needing most improvement	_____ (open-ended)
D5	Employers value communication as much as academics	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
D6	Oral advocacy is essential for litigation	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3)

		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
D7	Negotiation/client counseling crucial for corporate law	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
D8	Motivation to improve communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Not motivated (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Highly motivated (4)
D9	Practice communication outside class?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Often (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Always (4)
D10	Skill GIMPA should prioritize	_____ (open-ended)
D11	Importance of teamwork in communication training	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Very important (4)
D12	Prefer peer-assessment of communication?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

Section E: Perceived Gaps and Challenges

Code	Question	Response Options (with codes)
E1	Enough opportunities for communication training?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)

		<input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
E2	If <i>No</i> , what challenges?	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited opportunities (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Optional only (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of faculty (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient feedback (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Poor alignment (5) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (6)
E3	Satisfaction with training	<input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied (5)
E4	Extent expectations met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Fully (5)
E5	Do some students have more access than others?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
E6	Biggest gap in training	<input type="checkbox"/> Oral advocacy (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Legal writing (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiation (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Client counseling (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback (5)
E7	Communication activities assessed fairly?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

E8	Improvements needed	<input type="checkbox"/> More compulsory (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated modules (2) <input type="checkbox"/> More feedback (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Guest workshops (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Expanded moot courts (5)
E9	Gaps in training affect readiness for practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree (5)
E10	Ever skipped activities because they were optional?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)
E11	Should training be reviewed annually?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (0)

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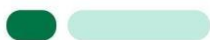
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