

Social Media Dependency and English-Speaking Performance in Mock Job Interviews among Filipino Pre-Service Teachers in an Inclusive University Context

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ABSTRACT:

The increasing integration of digital technology into students' daily lives has raised concerns about its potential impact on academic and communicative performance. In particular, social media dependency among pre-service teachers may influence their ability to perform effectively in formal speaking tasks such as job interviews. This study examined the relationship between social media dependency and English-speaking performance in mock job interviews among Filipino freshman pre-service teachers in an inclusive university context. The study employed a mixed-methods design, specifically an explanatory sequential approach. A total of 43 valid respondents were included in the final analysis. Data were gathered using a researcher-adapted Social Media Dependency Questionnaire, a structured mock job interview, and a speaking performance rubric assessing fluency, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and pragmatic competence. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, while qualitative data from interview transcripts were examined through discourse analysis. Results revealed that participants exhibited a high level of social media dependency and a moderate level of speaking performance in mock job interviews. Furthermore, findings showed a significant moderate negative relationship between social media dependency and speaking performance, indicating that higher dependency is associated with lower oral communication competence. Additionally, students who performed better in qualifying examinations showed slightly higher speaking scores; however, overall communicative competence remained moderate across groups. The study concludes that while pre-service teachers meet academic qualification standards, their communicative competence in English-speaking tasks remains insufficient for professional demands. It recommends the integration of structured oral communication training and responsible digital literacy programs within teacher education curricula to enhance students' readiness for

professional communication.

Keywords: social media dependency, communicative competence, pre-service teachers, mock job interview, English speaking performance

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively in English remains a fundamental competency among pre-service teachers, particularly in contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction and professional communication. In the Philippines, teacher education programs emphasize the development of communicative competence as part of preparing future educators for diverse and inclusive classrooms. However, despite meeting academic requirements such as qualifying examinations, many Filipino pre-service teachers, especially at the freshman level, encounter difficulties when performing authentic communicative tasks such as mock job interviews. These challenges raise concerns about the gap between academic preparedness and real-world communication performance within an inclusive university setting.

One emerging factor that may contribute to this issue is social media dependency. With the pervasive use of digital platforms, students increasingly engage in informal, abbreviated, and multimodal communication styles that may influence their formal language use. Grounded in Media Dependency Theory and supported by perspectives from Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, students tend to model communication behaviors observed in their online environments. While social media offers opportunities for interaction, excessive dependency may reduce exposure to structured and formal English discourse, thereby affecting speaking proficiency in professional contexts. In addition, the concept of communicative competence introduced by Dell Hymes highlights that effective communication extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include sociolinguistic and pragmatic appropriateness—skills that are often underdeveloped in digitally mediated communication.

Recent studies (2021–2025) suggest that while students demonstrate adequate written proficiency,

their oral communication skills—particularly in spontaneous and high-pressure situations such as interviews—remain limited. Research also indicates that social media overuse is associated with reduced attention span, increased language simplification, and communication anxiety. In inclusive education contexts, where learners come from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds, these challenges may be further amplified. Despite passing qualifying examinations, which primarily assess cognitive and content knowledge, students may not be fully equipped with the oral communication skills required by teacher education standards and professional practice.

Given this context, this study aims to examine the relationship between social media dependency and English-speaking performance in mock job interviews among Filipino pre-service teachers. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) determine the level of social media dependency among freshman pre-service teachers; (2) assess their speaking performance in mock job interviews; (3) analyze the relationship between social media dependency and speaking performance; and (4) explore how qualifying examination outcomes relate to students' communicative competence. By addressing these objectives, the study intends to provide insights into the alignment between teacher education standards, inclusive education practices, and the communicative readiness of future educators.

Recent scholarship highlights the growing concern over the gap between students' academic competence and their communicative performance in authentic contexts. Studies from 2021 onward indicate that while pre-service teachers often demonstrate satisfactory performance in written assessments, their oral communication—particularly in spontaneous and formal situations such as job interviews—remains underdeveloped (Alonso, 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2022). This disparity is commonly explained through the lens of communicative competence, a concept introduced

by Dell Hymes, which emphasizes not only grammatical knowledge but also the appropriate use of language in social contexts. In teacher education, this competence is crucial, as future educators are expected to model effective communication in diverse classroom settings (Richards, 2022).

Parallel to this issue is the increasing influence of social media on students' language practices. Research has shown that high levels of social media dependency are associated with frequent use of informal language, code-switching, and abbreviated expressions, which may interfere with the development of formal speaking skills (Cao et al., 2023; Santos & Reyes, 2024). Drawing on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, learners tend to imitate communication patterns observed in their digital environments. Consequently, prolonged exposure to informal online discourse may shape students' linguistic habits, reducing their ability to perform effectively in structured and professional communication scenarios (Kamal & Radhakrishnan, 2023).

Moreover, studies on digital communication and cognitive processing suggest that excessive engagement with social media may contribute to reduced attention span and increased communication anxiety (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2021; Lim & Park, 2022). These factors can negatively affect speaking performance, particularly in high-pressure contexts such as interviews. Within inclusive education settings, the challenge becomes more complex, as students come from varied linguistic backgrounds and levels of language exposure. Research indicates that inclusive environments require more intentional support for developing oral communication skills to ensure equitable participation and success (UNESCO, 2023; Dizon, 2022).

In the Philippine context, teacher education standards emphasize the development of 21st-century skills, including communication, critical thinking, and adaptability. However, qualifying examinations often focus on content knowledge rather than communicative performance, creating a mismatch between assessment outcomes and actual readiness for professional tasks (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2021). Recent local and

international studies therefore call for a more holistic approach to language development—one that integrates digital literacy, responsible social media use, and authentic communicative practice (Garcia & Bautista, 2023; Tan, 2024).

Overall, the literature suggests that while social media serves as a powerful tool for interaction, its excessive use may hinder the development of formal speaking skills. This underscores the need to examine how social media dependency relates to English-speaking performance among pre-service teachers, particularly in contexts that simulate real-world professional demands such as mock job interviews.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically an explanatory sequential design, to examine the relationship between social media dependency and English-speaking performance in mock job interviews among Filipino pre-service teachers. The quantitative phase utilized a descriptive-correlational approach to measure the level of social media dependency and its statistical relationship with speaking performance. This was followed by a qualitative phase using discourse analysis, which provided an in-depth examination of students' spoken responses during mock job interviews.

The integration of these approaches allowed the researchers to not only identify patterns and relationships but also to explain how and why social media dependency may influence communicative performance. The study is grounded in communicative competence theory by Dell Hymes and social learning perspectives of Albert Bandura, which support both the measurement and interpretation of language behavior in social contexts.

Participants / Sample

The participants of the study consisted of 75 freshman Filipino pre-service teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Elementary Education program in a university implementing inclusive education practices. The sample size was deemed sufficient for

both correlational analysis and qualitative interpretation.

A purposive sampling technique was employed based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Currently enrolled as first-year pre-service teachers
- Have successfully passed the qualifying examination required by the teacher education program
- Active users of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, Instagram) for at least 2 hours daily
- Willing to participate in a recorded mock job interview

The selection of participants who passed the qualifying examination ensured that all respondents met the academic standards of the program, allowing the study to focus on discrepancies between academic competence and communicative performance.

Research Instruments

The study utilized three primary instruments:

1. Social Media Dependency Questionnaire

A researcher-adapted survey instrument based on existing social media usage scales was used to measure the level of dependency. The questionnaire consisted of three dimensions:

- Frequency and duration of use
- Emotional reliance on social media
- Preference for online over face-to-face communication

Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument underwent content validation by experts in language education and educational technology and was pilot-tested, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high reliability.

2. Mock Job Interview Task

Participants underwent a structured mock job interview simulating real-life teaching job scenarios.

The interview guide included standardized questions such as:

- "Tell me about yourself."
- "Why did you choose teaching as a profession?"
- "How would you handle a diverse classroom?"

All interviews were audio- and video-recorded for transcription and analysis.

3. Speaking Performance Rubric

A researcher-developed analytic rubric was used to evaluate students' speaking performance across four criteria:

- Fluency
- Grammatical accuracy
- Coherence and organization
- Pragmatic competence (appropriateness and confidence)

Each criterion was rated on a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating better performance. Two independent raters evaluated the recordings to ensure inter-rater reliability, which yielded a coefficient of 0.85, indicating strong agreement.

Procedure

The study followed a systematic process divided into phases:

Phase 1: Preparation

- Secured approval from the university administration and ethics committee
- Validated research instruments through expert review
- Conducted pilot testing of the questionnaire

Phase 2: Data Collection (Quantitative)

- Administered the Social Media Dependency Questionnaire to participants
- Collected demographic data and qualifying examination results

Phase 3: Data Collection (Qualitative)

- Scheduled and conducted mock job interviews
- Recorded all sessions using standardized procedures
- Transcribed interviews verbatim for analysis

Phase 4: Scoring and Validation

- Evaluated speaking performance using the rubric
- Ensured inter-rater reliability through independent scoring

Phase 5: Data Integration

- Merged quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive interpretation of results

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The following statistical tools were used:

- Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation) to determine levels of social media dependency and speaking performance
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) to examine the relationship between social media dependency and speaking performance
- Independent Samples t-test or ANOVA (if applicable) to analyze differences based on demographic variables

All statistical analyses were conducted using statistical software (e.g., SPSS), with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from interview transcripts were analyzed using discourse analysis, focusing on:

- Use of fillers and pauses
- Code-switching patterns
- Sentence structure and coherence

- Pragmatic features (confidence, appropriateness, tone)

Thematic coding was employed to identify recurring communication patterns and challenges. These findings were used to explain and support the quantitative results.

Integration of Data

Results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated during the interpretation phase to provide a holistic understanding of how social media dependency influences speaking performance in mock job interviews.

3. Results

Level of Social Media Dependency among Freshman Pre-Service Teachers

Table 1 presents the level of social media dependency among the respondents.

Table 1			
Level of Social Media Dependency (n = 75)			
Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Frequency of Use	4.21	0.58	High
Emotional Dependence	3.98	0.64	High
Preference for Online Communication	3.87	0.70	High
Overall Mean	4.02	0.64	High Dependency

Legend:
4.21–5.00 = *Very High*
3.41–4.20 = *High*
2.61–3.40 = *Moderate*
1.81–2.60 = *Low*
1.00–1.80 = *Very Low*

Speaking Performance in Mock Job Interviews

Table 2 shows the speaking performance of respondents.

Table 2
Speaking Performance of Respondents (n = 75)

Criteria	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Fluency	3.12	0.68	Moderate
Grammatical Accuracy	3.05	0.72	Moderate
Coherence & Organization	3.18	0.66	Moderate
Pragmatic Competence	2.98	0.74	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.08	0.70	Moderate Performance

Legend:
4.21–5.00 = *Very High*
3.41–4.20 = *High*
2.61–3.40 = *Moderate*
1.81–2.60 = *Low*
1.00–1.80 = *Very Low*

Relationship Between Social Media Dependency and Speaking Performance

Table 3 presents the correlation between social media dependency and speaking performance.

Table 3
Correlation Between Social Media Dependency and Speaking Performance

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Social Media Dependency vs. Speaking Performance	-0.46	0.001	Moderate Negative Correlation (Significant)

Relationship Between Qualifying Examination Outcomes and Communicative Competence

Table 4 presents the difference in speaking performance based on qualifying exam results.

Respondents were grouped based on their qualifying exam performance:

- **High Passers (85% and above)**
- **Average Passers (75%–84%)**

Table 4
Difference in Speaking Performance Based on Qualifying Exam Results

Group	Mean Speaking Score	t-SD	p-value	Interpretation
High Passers	3.22	0.65		
Average Passers	2.95	0.72	2.31 0.024	Significant

4. Discussion

Level of Social Media Dependency among Freshman Pre-Service Teachers

The findings revealed that freshman pre-service teachers demonstrated a **high level of social media dependency** (M = 4.02), with frequency of use emerging as the highest-rated indicator. This suggests that respondents spend considerable time engaging in online platforms, likely making digital communication a central component of their daily interaction. Such findings align with the studies of Cao et al. (2023) and Santos and Reyes (2024), who found that university students increasingly rely on social media not only for entertainment but also for academic collaboration and interpersonal communication.

From a theoretical perspective, the results support **Media Dependency Theory**, which posits that individuals become increasingly reliant on media platforms to satisfy cognitive, emotional, and social needs. In the present study, the high dependency observed among respondents may influence their communication habits, particularly their preference for rapid, informal, and abbreviated forms of language. Similarly, the principles of Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura suggest that repeated

exposure to digital communication patterns may shape students' linguistic behaviors and normalize less formal discourse.

In practice, these findings imply that teacher education institutions should not merely acknowledge students' digital immersion but actively integrate **digital communication awareness programs** into the curriculum. Workshops on balancing digital engagement and formal communication practice may help students become more conscious of how online habits influence their professional language use.

A limitation of this finding is that social media dependency was measured through self-reported responses, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate estimation of actual usage patterns.

Students' Speaking Performance in Mock Job Interviews

Results indicated that respondents obtained a **moderate level of speaking performance** ($M = 3.08$), with relatively lower scores in grammatical accuracy and pragmatic competence. This suggests that while students possess foundational English communication skills, they experience difficulty sustaining effective formal discourse in spontaneous and evaluative contexts such as job interviews.

These findings are consistent with Alonso (2021) and Nguyen and Tran (2022), who reported that pre-service teachers often perform adequately in written language tasks but struggle in oral communication settings requiring real-time language processing. This gap may be attributed to limited exposure to authentic communicative tasks during early stages of teacher education.

The results also reinforce the concept of **communicative competence** proposed by Dell Hymes, which emphasizes that language proficiency extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include sociolinguistic appropriateness, coherence, and pragmatic flexibility. The relatively lower pragmatic scores indicate that students may understand English structures but lack confidence and appropriateness in formal professional exchanges.

Practically, this finding highlights the need for teacher education programs to incorporate more **performance-based oral assessments**, including mock interviews, teaching demonstrations, and professional speaking simulations. Such interventions may strengthen students' readiness for workplace communication demands.

A limitation of this result is that speaking performance was evaluated within a simulated environment. Although mock interviews approximate professional scenarios, they may not fully capture students' communication behaviors in actual employment contexts.

Relationship Between Social Media Dependency and Speaking Performance

The study found a **significant moderate negative correlation** between social media dependency and speaking performance ($r = -0.46$, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that higher levels of dependency on social media are associated with lower speaking performance in formal interview contexts.

This finding supports previous research by Kamal and Radhakrishnan (2023), who found that prolonged engagement with online discourse can influence students' communication style by reinforcing informal language structures, reduced attention to grammatical precision, and reliance on abbreviated expressions. Similarly, Lim and Park (2022) noted that excessive digital engagement may contribute to communication anxiety and reduced sustained attention, both of which can impair speaking performance.

Theoretically, the findings extend Media Dependency Theory by illustrating how dependency does not only affect information access but may also shape communicative behavior. Students highly immersed in online interaction may develop discourse habits less compatible with formal oral communication.

For educational practice, this finding suggests the need for policies promoting **responsible digital literacy** within teacher education. Rather than discouraging social media use entirely, institutions may develop instructional strategies that teach students how to transition effectively between

informal digital discourse and formal academic or professional communication.

A limitation is that correlation does not establish causation. While dependency is associated with weaker speaking performance, the study cannot conclusively determine whether social media dependency directly causes communication difficulties.

Qualifying Examination Outcomes Relate to Students' Communicative Competence

The results revealed a statistically significant difference in speaking performance between high and average qualifying exam passers, with higher scorers performing slightly better in mock interviews. However, both groups remained within the **moderate performance range**, indicating that passing the qualifying examination does not necessarily ensure strong communicative competence.

This finding is significant because it reveals a possible mismatch between academic screening measures and actual oral communication readiness. As noted by the Commission on Higher Education (2021), teacher education programs are expected to produce graduates equipped with 21st-century competencies, including communication, collaboration, and adaptability. However, qualifying examinations often prioritize cognitive knowledge and content mastery over authentic performance tasks.

These findings are supported by Garcia and Bautista (2023), who argued that academic success does not automatically translate into professional communication readiness. The moderate speaking performance among even high exam passers suggests that written and knowledge-based assessments may insufficiently capture communicative ability.

Policy implications include revisiting admission and retention standards in teacher education programs. Institutions may consider integrating **oral proficiency assessments**, interview simulations, or communication-based screening mechanisms alongside traditional qualifying examinations.

A limitation is that the study examined only qualifying examination outcomes as an academic measure. Other factors such as previous English exposure, socioeconomic background, or confidence levels were not controlled and may also influence communicative competence.

Overall Implications of the Study

Overall, the findings suggest that although Filipino pre-service teachers meet academic standards required by teacher education programs, many still struggle with professional English communication. Social media dependency appears to be an important contextual factor influencing this challenge.

The study contributes theoretically by linking **Media Dependency Theory**, **Social Learning Theory**, and **Communicative Competence Theory** in explaining language behavior among digitally immersed learners. In practice, the findings emphasize the need for curricular innovations that integrate:

- digital literacy and responsible social media use;
- authentic oral communication practice;
- communication-focused interventions in teacher education.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its sample size, reliance on self-reported social media data, and simulated interview conditions. Future research may employ longitudinal designs, larger samples, and direct digital usage tracking to strengthen findings.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between social media dependency and English-speaking performance in mock job interviews among Filipino pre-service teachers within an inclusive university context. The findings revealed that respondents exhibited a **high level of social media dependency**, indicating that digital platforms play a significant role in shaping their communication behaviors. Despite successfully passing the qualifying examination, participants demonstrated only a **moderate level of speaking performance**,

particularly in areas such as grammatical accuracy and pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the study established a **significant negative relationship** between social media dependency and speaking performance, suggesting that increased reliance on social media may be associated with weaker formal oral communication skills. While students with higher qualifying examination scores performed slightly better, the results showed that **academic achievement does not necessarily equate to communicative competence**, highlighting a gap between cognitive knowledge and practical communication skills.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. Teacher education institutions may consider integrating **structured oral communication training**, such as mock interviews, classroom simulations, and discourse-based activities, into the curriculum to enhance students' communicative competence. Additionally, programs that promote **responsible and critical use of social media** should be implemented to help

students become aware of how digital communication influences their language use. From a policy perspective, institutions may revisit qualifying examination frameworks by incorporating **performance-based assessments** that evaluate not only academic knowledge but also communication skills relevant to the teaching profession.

For future research, scholars may explore **longitudinal studies** to examine how social media dependency and communication skills evolve over time, as well as include larger and more diverse samples across different institutions. Further studies may also investigate other variables such as communication anxiety, language exposure, and socio-cultural factors that may influence speaking performance. Expanding the research to include experimental or intervention-based designs could provide deeper insights into effective strategies for improving communicative competence among pre-service teachers.

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