

# Pitching For Polytechnic Students: How To Deliver A Winning Presentation

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Received: 22 February 2025 | Accepted: 16 May 2025 | Published: 1 June 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ijares.2025.7.3.23>

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**Abstract:** *Successful pitching is a skill necessary for polytechnic students to impart their ideas in the arena of academia and work. The study looks at several facets of an effective pitch: structuring the content, verbal and non-verbal communication, engaging the audience, and visual aids. It also points out common problem's students face, such as stage fright, lack of clarity, and failure to engage with the audience. Employing a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study uses survey analysis and thematic insights from student interviews and focus groups. The mixed-method analysis shows that students who engaged in pitching activities more often were noted to be more confident with structuring their pitches, and this confidence was closely linked to performance-related communication skills, including clarity in verbal expression and non-verbal communication. However, the study pointed out that training alone does not significantly change students' confidence or participation in pitching activities, thereby indicating a need for students to be exposed to more pragmatic learning experiences. The insights gathered have fed into suggestions of giving more exposure to real-life pitching activities, to intensify communication training through more interactive exercises, and to incorporate AI-enabled feedback and mentorship programs in training. The research takes a step forward in improving the readiness of students for their academic, entrepreneurial, and professional futures.*

**Keywords:** Pitching, Polytechnic Students, Presentation Skills, Public Speaking, Communication Training

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## 1. Introduction

Mastering the art of pitching is essential for effectively sharing ideas, projects, or business proposals in a clear, concise, and compelling manner. Therefore, to provide students with future real-world uses such as academic presentations, industrial competitions, entrepreneurship, and job interviews, polytechnics must assist the students in learning how to pitch. Aside from confidence, a good pitch must have a couple of other factors. Someone desires the content to logically follow, for good verbal and non-verbal communication, intentional use of visual media, and optimum audience engagement. The student will be able to communicate as well as direct attention in presenting ideas effectively after they are polished. A deliberate achievement of some of these goals may include winning competitions, acquiring project approvals, or attracting investments.

According to studies, students' skill to engage and persuade audiences largely depends on their communication and presentation skills (Smith & Brown, 2019). In addition, Johnson et al. (2021) noted how body language and slides affect pitches' effectiveness. Nevertheless, although good pitching is paramount, the majority of polytechnic students are not taught this vital communication skill in school. As a result, they suffer from debilitating stage nerves, are unable to express themselves well, and receive poor responses from the audience when presenting, leading to suboptimal results.

Pitching is a skill that can be carried across many industries, from business and tech-related industries, engineering, to other forms of art. It helps one to pitch ideas and make decisions, encourages creativity, and later earns one's confidence during public speaking and problem-solving. Proper pitching also raises employability by preparing the students for the working world. In pitching, the environments to determine whether a pitch is successful or winning include: clarity, confidence, creativity, and persuasiveness to the audience, aided by clear enunciation.

### **1.2 Background of the Study**

It is not mere skill in presentation now and then that matters; it needs to be garnering interest and evoking awe for a project, idea, or business concept. When pitched well, every opportunity will be open to Polytechnic students: from interviews to new business ventures, to class projects, to impressing their peers.

Exactly similar to confidence would be the deliverance of a message that is entertaining, clear, and within constraints. Studies displayed how well-developed communication skills help the students and encourage the improvement of their performance and persuasion. However, lack of exposure to prowess means that polytechnic students depart this very interesting field with terrible stage fright, terrible use of voice or body language, and in the worst scenario, without keeping the interest of the audience.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Students pursuing their programs in polytechnic colleges should learn the good techniques of pitching to carry their ideas to their peers academically and professionally. Most of them have not tasted the basics of pitching, which include effective verbal and nonverbal communication, overcoming stage fright, and audience engagement, followed by a coherent flow in content. The result is generally poor presentations, which in turn adversely affect students in passing on their ideas, therefore, serving as a hindrance to their academic progress and employability.

Structured instruction in pitching strategies remains inadequate, even as polytechnic courses increasingly emphasise communication and entrepreneurial skills. An overwhelming majority of the students lack clarity, confidence in narration, and the capability to combine and build stories that are engaging, says a study. Uneven presentation quality and unequal performance results arise because of the absence of clear training programs and assessment standards.

This proposed research effort aims to tackle these gaps by assessing the effectiveness of various forms of pitching and developing appropriate training curricula that would be specifically oriented toward polytechnic students. The study seeks to provide skills for the students, beginning with case analysis through literature review and direct student feedback for the development of their pitching skills. Students should be given a toolbox for success on interviews, class presentations, and pitching a big idea for their careers. One pitch at a time, they draw nearer and closer toward their career goals.

## 1.4 Objectives

The study aims to look at;

- 1) Assess students' experience, confidence, and challenges in pitching presentations.
- 2) Identify key elements and strategies that contribute to a successful pitch.
- 3) Evaluate the impact of formal training and suggest improvements for pitching education.

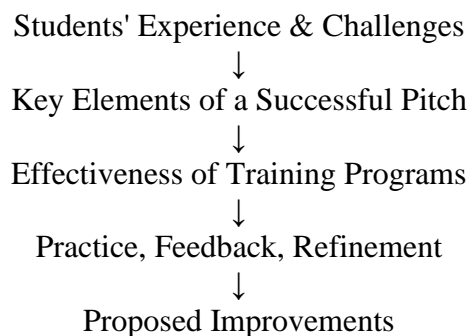
## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides the students with the presentation and communication skills that are vital to their academic and professional success. The polytechnic students must present their ideas in project presentations, business contests, job interviews, and professional environments. Several conditions for the development of assurance and clarity in presentation within the study material structure have been mentioned to help teachers create audience-engaging presentations, including verbal and nonverbal communication.

The study provides, once again, a standpoint for educators and institutions about incorporating thoroughly planned pitching skills training within a curriculum. Then, one can perhaps refine teaching strategies that, if instituted, would sensitise educators to some of the difficulties the students have, such as stage fright, clarity, and limited audience engagement. Furthermore, practical learning experiences, mentorship and coaching in conjunction with technology could equip students with better pitching skills in line with industry requirements.

According to industry inputs, graduates with good presentation skills have the edge over their peers when it comes to the job search process. Skills sought by employers in graduate students include persuasive communication. By fostering a pitching culture, this study addresses job market readiness, innovation, and workplace communications towards a direct benefit for students, educators, and the vital intersection between academia and industry.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework



This study provides a framework by which polytechnic colleges could train their students in pitching. Five main phases comprise the overall framework: Formal training and associated support systems, understanding experiences and problems, getting feedback and practicing, recognizing the key components of a good pitch, improving performance, and boosting self-assurance.

Prior experience pitching and common presentation problems, like stage fright, audience engagement, and structural concerns, are the main topics of the first experience and challenges stage. These problems often hinder students' attempts to produce compelling presentations. Regarding this matter, the second phase of official training and support systems places particular emphasis on organized learning methods such as pitching courses, mentorship

programs, and workshops. The main goal of this course is to impart particular technical knowledge about communication methodologies, content structuring, and anxiety management strategies related to low self-esteem.

Training alone is not enough to build up self-confidence. Therefore, practice becomes necessary; in addition, the willingness to accept constructive criticism and a commitment to continuous improvement are also key factors. Because of this, real-world experiences, feedback from mentors and peers, and repeated pitching become vital. Practice allows pupils to improve their methods over time by getting enlightening feedback from experts and teachers. They also become stronger and more proficient communicators as a result of this disconnect between theory and practical applications.

At this stage, the focus is on what makes a pitch stand out. Presenters are provided time and resources to get clarity in their content organization and delivery, in words as well as body language, and use visuals in a way that enhances their message. Keeping an audience's attention through storytelling, interactivity, or a mix of both would be just as important. And when all these elements come together, that would be a well-structured, compelling presentation with a lasting impact.

## **2. Literature Review**

The research emphasises the significance of presenting skills in communication and career progression. Crafty presentations develop persuasive skills as espoused, and this becomes instrumental in individual careers. In businesses, organised pitches attract investors and positively influence students' performances in interviews and competitions, according to Yue and Knight. South argues that organised thoughts are crucial when one prepares a pitch (Heath & Heath 2007). Denning further argues that the art of storytelling generates much value to pitches as they become interesting and unforgettable.

Effective pitching enhances such skills as nonverbal communication. Vocal tone, body language, and gestures can all deeply affect the level of engagement among audiences, according to research (De Grez et al., 2009). One must consider not only the contents of the delivery itself but also the manner of delivery. The pitches must be adjusted to meet an audience's interests and needs for the communication to be effective, according to O'Hair et al. (2015). More than just imparting knowledge, pitching develops critical thinking abilities. The establishment of strong pitch skills is highly correlated with improved critical thinking and enhanced problem-solving abilities, as Rubin et al. (2014) argued and evidenced, which demonstrates that there are additional benefits gained from developing this skill that go beyond the next presentation.

Regardless of the good feedback, there remains a specified list of challenges when acquiring the knowing-doing gap. Speaking in public may be a source of anxiety that could affect the performance of presentations (Morreale et al., 2017); this can refer to shaking or giving a very dry speech due to nervousness. Fortunately, it has been seen that the mentoring and colleague support through helpful critique do elicit great confidence boosts and performance improvement gains as an additional perk.

Cultural differences may interfere with how well a pitch is received. Hofstede pointed out that different methods of communication and their application in multi-ethnic settings have a

chance for misunderstanding (2001). This implies the presenter has to theorise how to deliver their messages within a cultural framework.

Ms. De Grez et al. (2009) suggested practical ways to hone pitching skills, like repetition. Whereas Mayer (2001) thinks of pictures and slides as the right tools for doing visual explanations, believing them to be quite effective among listeners. Kolb (1984) basically believed that if you participated in pitch contests, that is active participation, plus others, this would be one more hoisting step in achieving competencies.

Educators have theorised that they try to mould their pitch techniques through attacks on different aspects: both memorisation and a systematic beginning through inputs and outputs. It should set up an extensive development plan that should not only hone the skills but also enhance one's Communication Skills while working towards their employability.

### **3. Method**

A mixed method in a questionnaire and interview to give the researcher an insight into the polytechnic student pitching skill-building experience has included the challenges students faced, including the course's usefulness. The students who would participate in the competition of each other's pitching will include 158 students from different programs and semesters, one to five. Structured questionnaires were prepared for these two groups concerning the students' experiences of confidence, difficulties in pitching, and training feedback.

We held a focus group and followed up with semi-structured interviews involving 10 students to better understand their personal experiences with pitching — how they connected with their audience, what challenges they faced, and the kinds of problems they chose to focus on.

The quantitative data were analysed for the existence of relationships between communication skills, confidence, and engagement through descriptive and correlational analysis. At the same time, the thematic analysis of qualitative comments enabled the researchers to highlight common pitfalls and propose remedial actions. Nursing provided an extensive perspective on the corresponding first-hand accounts in which researchers described each of the challenges overcome and successfully assessed how well and to what extent the challenges were addressed through the training program.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

This section presents a consolidated view of the quantitative research results, with the interviews and focus groups. The combination of statistical evidence with students' experiences provides invaluable insights regarding key issues and strategies which polytechnic students should train for, and training needs for pitching.

#### **Students' Experience, Confidence, and Challenges in Pitching Presentations** **Quantitative Findings**

The students were surveyed, and the results indicated that 42% had never done a pitching presentation-35% had done this on a few occasions; this gave rise to a rather low average, with only 22% of students feeling confident about structuring a pitch and another 28% with some confidence.

**Table 1: Pitching Experience**

Pitching Experience	Percentage (%)
Never participated	42%
Occasionally	35%
Sometimes	15%
Often or Always	8%

Equally, they face several challenges while delivering a pitch. Among them, stage fright was the most prevalent, 65 totals, then came their stumbling speech, 48 persons, poor interaction with the audience, 41 persons, and poor use of visual aids was cited by 37 persons as the reason hampering their convincing abilities.

**Table 2: Challenges Faced in Pitching**

Challenges Faced in Pitching	Percentage (%)
Stage fright	65%
Lack of clarity in speech	48%
Poor audience engagement	41%
Ineffective use of visual aids	37%

### Observations from Interviews and Focus Groups

A thematic analysis of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions confirmed that public speaking anxiety can be an affront to learners. Student A faced problems with eye contact, and Student C had to remain confident even with unexpected questions. These insights complement some quantitative data and call for training in overcoming nervousness and improving delivery techniques.

Similarly, effective content structuring is another common struggle. Student B admitted that she would get good thoughts, but putting them all together was somehow challenging. This ties back to the survey results, where students rated content structuring as the most critical factor in an effective pitch (87%).

### Elements and Strategies for a Successful Pitch

#### Quantitative Findings

The students identified several components that they felt would play a crucial role in a successful pitch. The highest-rated of these was structuring of content (87%), followed by verbal communication (72%) and non-verbal communication (64%). In addition, students used a variety of techniques to drive engagement, including storytelling (38%), interactive elements like Q&A (42%), and humour (19%).

**Table 3: Key Elements of a Successful Pitch**

Key Elements of a Successful Pitch	Percentage (%)
Content structuring	87%
Verbal communication	72%
Non-verbal communication (gestures, posture)	64%
Use of visual aids (slides, videos)	59%

## Observations from Interviews and Focus Groups

The interview responses point out that storytelling and interactive elements help to keep the pitch lively and attractive. Student G argued that personal stories help catch the audience's attention. On the other hand, Students I and J stated that rhetorical questions and eye contact increase audience rapport. Student E stressed the importance of visual aids: simplified slides promote understanding. This indicates that those students applying tactics to engage others have more effective presentation outcomes.

## Evaluating the Impact of Formal Training and Suggested Improvements

### Quantitative Findings

The findings show that among respondents, 53% were given some structured training in pitching techniques; however, just 29% felt the training was quite effective, 34% were somewhat effective, and 15% found it ineffective. Some suggestions made by students to improve the training include, among others, 61% recommending more practical work; 57% favouring more workshops; and 46% proposing that feedback should combine the use of AI and digital tools.

**Table 4: Effectiveness of Pitching Training**

Effectiveness of Pitching Training	Percentage (%)
Very effective	29%
Somewhat effective	34%
Ineffective	15%
No training received	22%

## Observations from Interviews and Focus Groups

The need for better training opportunities was strongly supported by qualitative data. Student B suggested offering dedicated pitching workshops, while Student D emphasized the importance of more in-class presentations to build confidence. Student F proposed involving industry professionals to provide expert feedback, a recommendation echoed by survey participants.

## Correlation Analysis of Pitching Skills and Training Effectiveness

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' experience, confidence, training, and communication skills.

**Table 5: The Relationship Between Students' Experience, Confidence, Training, And Communication Skills.**

Variables	Correlation (r)	Interpretation
Participation in Pitching & Confidence	0.37	Moderate Positive Correlation
Confidence & Verbal Communication	0.65	Strong Positive Correlation
Confidence & Non-Verbal Communication	0.57	Strong Positive Correlation
Training Effectiveness & Verbal Skills	0.34	Moderate Positive Correlation
Training Effectiveness & Non-Verbal Skills	0.31	Moderate Positive Correlation
Received Training & Confidence	0.18	Weak Positive Correlation
Received Training & Participation	0.15	Very Weak Positive Correlation

The correlation results show that participation in pitching presentations has a moderate positive correlation (0.37) with students' confidence in structuring a pitch. This suggests that frequent engagement in pitching activities helps improve confidence.

Furthermore, confidence in structuring a pitch is strongly correlated with both verbal communication (0.65) and non-verbal communication (0.57), indicating that students who feel more confident also perform better in their delivery.

However, the correlation between receiving training and confidence is weak (0.18), and receiving training does not strongly influence participation in pitching (0.15). This implies that formal training alone is not enough to build confidence or encourage students to pitch more often—real-world practice is essential.

### **Recommendations Based on Findings**

Hands-on experience is essential for students to master pitching. No amount of theory can replace real-world practice. The more opportunities they have to pitch—whether in competitions, mock presentations, or industry events—the more comfortable and adaptable they become. Confidence comes from doing, not just learning. Equally important is upgrading communication training. A strong pitch isn't just about what you say—it's how you say it. Instead of relying on lectures, training should be interactive, incorporating role-playing, group discussions, and real-time feedback. By refining their tone, body language, and stage presence in a dynamic setting, students can make their pitches more engaging and impactful.

Still, learning the skills and feeling confident using them are two different things. To close this gap, institutions should integrate AI-powered feedback, mentorship from industry professionals, and simulated pitching environments. These tools create a more immersive, personalized learning experience, helping students sharpen their skills in realistic scenarios.

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## **5. Conclusion**

This study shines a light on just how important pitching skills are for polytechnic students, especially when it comes to organizing their ideas, communicating, connecting with their audience, and using visuals effectively. What we've found is that while jumping into pitching activities does help students feel more confident, many still struggle with nerves, organizing their thoughts, or truly engaging their listeners. And while there are training programs out there, they often fall short—students need more than just theory; they need real, hands-on practice and interactive learning to truly grow.

The data tells us something interesting: confidence in pitching goes hand in hand with strong communication skills, but simply attending training sessions does not magically make students more confident or eager to participate. What makes a difference is getting practical experience—whether through role-playing, real-world pitching scenarios, or feedback that helps them improve step by step.

Therefore, institutions need to step up by offering more opportunities for students to pitch in real-life settings, pairing them with mentors who can guide them, and using tools like AI to give personalised feedback. By making learning more engaging and practical, students will walk away not just with skills, but with the confidence to use them—whether they're presenting in class, pitching a start-up idea, or speaking up in their future careers. These skills aren't just

about getting ahead; they're about being able to share ideas in a way that truly resonates, no matter the setting.

### Acknowledgement

As the author of this study, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah (POLISAS) for the institutional support and encouragement provided throughout the research process. I am especially grateful to the General Studies Department for their cooperation and assistance during data collection and coordination with student participants. My sincere thanks also go to the students who took part in the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions. Their openness and thoughtful responses were invaluable in providing meaningful insights into the challenges and strategies related to pitching. This research would not have been possible without their active engagement and willingness to share their experiences. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the guidance, motivation, and continuous support received from my colleagues and mentors, whose feedback greatly enriched the quality of this work.

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