



## Empowering human potential and fostering values: A vision for private higher education in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the empowerment of human potential and how it fosters values in Private Higher Education in Malaysia. Due to the high demand for postsecondary education, the private higher education sector is experiencing fierce competition, making strategic communication more crucial. The study employs a quantitative approach with a sample size of 24 respondents, namely academic and non-academic staff from private higher education institutions in Malaysia, where a statistical analysis was performed using SMART-PLS. The study employed a random sampling method to gather samples from private higher education institutions in Malaysia. The results of the analysis indicated that talent does not influence strategic communication positively. The  $\beta$  value result of this variable is 0.767, the t value is 1.730, and the p-value of 0.084 did not meet the benchmark where the t value is less than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05. The results of human values also do not influence strategic communication positively. The  $\beta$  value is 0.007, the t value is 0.021, and the p-value of 0.983 again did not meet the benchmark for the t value and the p-value. The findings of this study pave the way for future research on strategic communication in private higher education institutions and provide practitioners with actionable mechanisms to enhance this area of practice. This research concludes that strategic communication plays a crucial role in the private higher education sector and that talent and human values are crucial to achieving successful communication strategies.

**Contribution/Originality:** This research aims to improve strategic communication in Malaysian private higher education institutions. To liberalize job participation, private higher education institutions must manage talent and human values. Therefore, improving strategic communication will boost private higher education's image in the work environment. Many education studies examine strategic communication's type, process, organizational development, and leadership. This study examines strategic communication in private higher education in Malaysia in terms of employee's talent and human values using a theoretical framework that will bridge the theoretical gap.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research into the use and analysis of strategic communication approaches for reaching internal and external stakeholders is essential, considering the proliferation of new technologies and the increasing reliance on mediated communication. Communication methods between universities and their students need to be assessed so that they

can be made more effective (Penna, 2020). Because they need a means of advocacy and communication to present their side of the story and mitigate difficulties and misperceptions, universities and colleges should reevaluate how they use the communication function (Penna, 2020). Challenges have arisen in higher education in recent years as a result of factors such as increased internationalization, a dynamic labor market, and a rising demand for innovative pedagogical approaches (Miotto, Del-Castillo-Feito, & Blanco-González, 2020). Institutions of higher learning are in a constant state of competition for the best and brightest students, the most prestigious faculty members, the most lucrative corporate partnerships, the most desirable campus locations, the most funding for research, and the most resources for both teaching and research (Miotto et al., 2020).

These days, it's not uncommon for universities to plot out a brand-new strategic communication process (Hatherill, 2017). Communication is essential for universities to build and maintain positive relationships with all their stakeholders, including internal stakeholders. On the other hand, internal stakeholders are just as significant as external ones (Rachoene, 2019). Considering this, educational institutions must do a better job of informing the public about their successes, advantages, innovations, positions on various topics or news items, and programmes. Strategic communication can help universities and colleges reach new audiences and spread their stories of success (Campbell, 2018).

Thus, the research objectives for this research are:

RO1: To examine the influence of *talent* on Strategic Communication in Private Higher Education Institution.

RO2: To investigate the influence of *human values* on strategic communication in Private Higher Education Institution.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Exposition

The broad paradigm of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) predicts and explains many of the changes that people make in interactions to create, maintain, or lessen social distance. It delves into the myriad ways in which we modify our communication, as well as the factors that motivate us and the effects this has on those around us. CAT addresses difficulties in communicating across groups while also making connections between these difficulties and the intergroup stakes at play in any given interaction (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Our words, nonverbal communication, and manners are almost entirely driven by our social identities as members of groups at other times. As a representative of the field of communication studies, Joana, for instance, regularly addresses audiences comprised of chemists, biologists, and physicists (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

This research used Giles' definition of strategic communication and the CAT Framework to analyze the impact of talent and human values on this discipline. Ali Elhami's research acknowledges the potential of this concept in the field of education. To illustrate how CAT is being used in the classroom, consider the following: When teaching a foreign language, teachers adapt their lesson plans and vocabulary selection to their students' individual skill levels. All humans use a wide range of linguistic variations in their daily interactions, including varying formality, pace, and a host of other factors (Elhami, 2020). With the aforementioned caveats in mind, it is up to the researcher to decide whether or not to apply the theory as a theoretical framework to the independent variables. This concept has been applied beyond the realm of merely intercultural and intergenerational communication to areas such as organizational communication, health communication, small group communication, and most recently, instructional communication (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991).

### 2.2. Strategic Communication

Strategic communication refers to the sharing of information that is crucial to the continued success of a business or other organization. Strategic communication, to be more precise, is the method by which a group or organization actively takes part in conversations vital to achieving its goals (Zerfass, Vercic, Nothhaft, & Werder,

2018). Organizations include not only businesses, governments, and nonprofits but also social movements and well-known individuals. Effective communication is a necessity for any stage of the strategy development, refinement, presentation, execution, implementation, or operation process (Zerfass et al., 2018).

The study of how businesses use communication to reach their objectives is known as strategic communication (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Public and private organizations, as well as political and social movements, NGOs, and grassroots groups, all use strategic communication to advance their goals (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). In its purest form, strategic communication investigates the communication practices of various types of organizations from a macro level. It recognizes the importance of communication in management and the multifaceted nature of the concept of strategy (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Higher education industries in many developed and developing countries are struggling to keep up with rising demand for higher education (Alkhodhair, Alsanad, Alghathbar, & Gumaiei, 2020). High-quality education is essential for promoting sustainable development and ensuring economic growth in the years to come (Alkhodhair et al., 2020). To guarantee the long-term viability of their strategies, the Higher Education Sector must improve the quality of their strategy implementation processes and take on the dynamic complexity of their qualities to identify areas for development (Alkhodhair et al., 2020). Implementing a strategy, however, is difficult because of issues like process modelling, automation, dynamic complexity, and cognitive constraints (Alkhodhair et al., 2020). In response to a global call for more entrepreneurialism among Malaysia's higher education institutions, Abdahir, Hussin, and Rasiah (2021) studied entrepreneurs who entered the education industry with the goals of business diversification, capacity building, lifelong education, and nation-building (Abdahir et al., 2021). The findings highlighted the importance of having leaders in new private higher education initiatives who can develop the adaptable skill sets necessary for managing a university (Abdahir et al., 2021).

### 2.3. Talent

The "battle for talent" is gaining traction as higher education becomes more market-driven in the midst of a financial, structural, and cultural upheaval in higher education institutions (Khalid, 2019). To ensure the continued viability of the staff development role in this knowledge-intensive industry, academic leadership and human resources will need to reevaluate a number of practices related to the identification, development, and application of talent (Khalid, 2019). When it comes down to its most basic definition, talent development is "the process by which individuals discover what they are good at, what they love to do, and use their talents to express their values" (Reinert & Debebe, 2023). The phrase is inspired by the idea of "the element," which denotes a meeting place between a person's inherent skills and their truest interests (authenticity) (Reinert & Debebe, 2023). The knowledge and skills learned via education are necessary for one to be able to decide for themselves how they want to define their identity; hence, the two are interrelated (Reinert & Debebe, 2023). The argument goes on to say that by restricting people's access to school and determining their professional alternatives, sociocultural and socioeconomic settings prevent the development of true genius (Reinert & Debebe, 2023).

A strategy for reaching out to relevant parties should always be in place. Companies are always on the lookout for talented employees, as talent is one of a person's most valuable assets. People have shown exceptional abilities in many fields just by virtue of their abilities, including technology, invention, entrepreneurship, music, acting, singing, tenor, sports, calligraphy, painting, education, and public speaking (Ansar & Baloch, 2018). Because of the scarcity of this "rare resource," companies have always competed for access to talented employees. Having talented or skilled employees on hand is no guarantee of success or prosperity. Any successful company must allocate resources to talent management (Ansar & Baloch, 2018).

Companies all over the world are vying for the attention of the best and brightest employees in today's increasingly competitive job market. To achieve strategic, long-term success, organizations need to systematically attract, identify, develop, engage, retain, and deploy their most valuable talents (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, &

Scullion, 2020). Globalization, technological advancements, and broader socio-economic, geopolitical, and demographic shifts have created a challenging business environment in which companies must find, attract, hire, develop, and retain talent if they are to succeed (Claus, 2019). Businesses rely on talent management to help them discover, create, and guard their most valuable strategic assets so they can compete successfully over the long term (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Most companies rely on one or more key people to coordinate the strategic communication process because of a lack of skills or talent on the pitch (Farewell, 2012).

From the above philosophies, the First Hypothesis of the Research is:

*H1: Talent has an influence on Strategic Communication.*

#### 2.4. Human Values

The decline of human life and the state of the planet as a whole make it clear that now is the time to invest in the growth of human values (Sivakumar, 2020). Sensitivity to the beautiful in literature, art, nature, and life in general is on the decline because altruism, unselfish acts of service to others, and idealism are out of fashion today (Sivakumar, 2020). Therefore, college should be a great place to instill morals and ethics (Kanyakumari, 2021).

According to Popescu, the four pillars of strategic communication---actions, language, images, and symbols---all rely on narratives to achieve their goals by appealing to the target audience's emotions and influencing their beliefs and attitudes. The use of images and symbols has a significant impact on narratives, themes, and messages, and it is important to contextualize them within a particular culture in order to understand them (Popescu, 2020). One analyst has called values "the cornerstone of effective politics," arguing that they are powerful tools for bringing about positive change in society. When our values are brought to life, it gives us a warm, fuzzy feeling. Values-driven social change communications are more effective at connecting people to problems in their communities and inspiring them to take action on these issues (Mullen, 2018).

Values in the workplace significantly affect employee actions (Rasip, Muslim, Basir, Sulong, & Bawadi, 2020). When it comes to doing their jobs, academic staff members place a premium on a wide range of workplace values, including mental challenge, autonomy, variety, and creativity (Rasip et al., 2020). Therefore, universities and colleges may stipulate that prospective faculty members must score well on the Work Value Assessment (Rasip et al., 2020). People usually have one of two meanings in mind when they use the term "strategic communication:" (a) the organizational approach, which is important for institutions, democracy, and the relationships between the public, governments, and institutions; or (b) the societal approach, which places more emphasis on individual values, norms, and the ways in which they shape and are shaped by public opinion, democracy, and culture.

From the above philosophies, the Second Hypothesis of the Research is:

*H2: Human Values have an influence on Strategic Communication.*

Based on the literature review above, the research framework of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

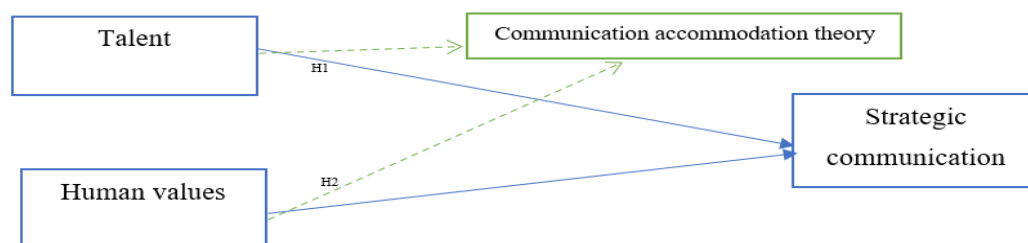


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from six different private universities in Malaysia for this pilot study. This paper uses a quantitative research methodology to investigate the connection between strategic communication, talent, and

human values at work in Private Higher Education in Malaysia, as befits the aims and scope of the study. A quantitative method was used because theoretical frameworks are the overarching goals of studies. Methods for selecting and collecting data from subjects are integral parts of the research design in quantitative studies (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The goal of quantitative research is to prove or disprove a hypothesis through the use of numerical data that has been manipulated logically and mathematically. The researcher will draw reliable conclusions based on the objectivity and orderliness of quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data was gathered through a questionnaire sent via email to the private universities, which the students filled out on their own time. The questionnaire and a letter providing context for the study were attached to the email. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a web-based survey has excellent internal reliability and consistent responses across all questionnaire items, suggesting a high response rate potential. Statistical analysis for this study was performed using the SMART PLS3 software package. The PLS-SEM technique is useful in behavioural research because it helps scientists make sense of the connections between different measures of interest. It's also useful when theories are still being developed because it lets researchers present revised hypotheses in the context of exploratory studies (Ravand & Baghaei, 2016). The sample size for this paper was 24 individuals from six private higher education institution. The respondent was from the management office, faculties, and administration offices of Private Higher Education in Malaysia. This study was conducted using the convince sampling method (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

##### 4.1. Demographic Profile

The information received from the questionnaire was assessed to learn pertinent information about the respondents. The researcher gave the survey to six different private higher education institutions. The researcher distributed 32 questionnaires and received 30 surveys. Twenty-four surveys were usable.

Table 1. Response rate.

Total questionnaire distributed	Total questionnaire received	Total usable questionnaire	Total unusable questionnaire	Response rate percentage
32	30	24	6	75%

Table 1 shows the demographic data acquired to provide background on the respondents in this study. The questionnaire asks for demographic data such as gender, educational background, workplace, job status, and department.

The demographic data of the survey respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic details.

Description	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	7	29.16
	Female	17	70.84
Educational background	Bachelor's degree	4	16.66
	Master's degree	13	54.16
	Doctoral degree	7	29.16
Private higher education type	University	19	79.16
	University college	4	16.66
	Branch campus	1	4.16
Job status	Academician	18	75
	Non- academician	6	25
Department	Management	2	8.33
	Faculty	19	79.16
	Administration	3	12.5

Seven male respondents made up 29.16% of the total. The remaining 17 respondents (70.84%) were women. Four respondents (16.66%) had bachelor's degrees. 13 respondents (54.16%) held master's degrees. Seven responders (29.16%) had a doctorate.

The researcher used the Ministry of Higher Education's three key categories to understand Private Higher Education respondents. Thus, 19 responses (79.16%) were from private higher education — universities. Four responses (16.66%) were from Private Higher Education - University College. Finally, 4.16% of responses were from Private Higher Education - Branch Campuses.

At least 18 of the 24 responses are from academicians. This represented 75% of respondents. Six non-academicians made up 25% of the respondents. Two of the 24 respondents were from management. This represented 8.33% of respondents. Most of the 19 responses were from faculty. Faculty comprised 79.16% of the total response. Three responses (12.5%) were from administration.

#### 4.2. Reliability and Validity Test

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for the variables are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Construct reliability and validity of pilot study.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
HV	0.945	0.961	0.951	0.545
SC	0.803	0.409	0.622	0.194
T	0.921	0.939	0.933	0.564

Table 3 demonstrates that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values over 0.803. Human value has 0.945 Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha for talent is 0.921. The paper examined whether survey questionnaires were suitable for final data collection. The researcher determined that the questionnaires were well-designed to obtain the relevant data after analyzing 24 participants' Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability statistics. The table shows that most convergent validity (AVE) is greater than 0.50, indicating satisfactory indicators. HV AVE is 0.545, and T AVE is 0.564. SC AVE is 0.194. Thus, the research suggests changing the questionnaire to assure variable understanding.

Table 3 and Figure 2 show SC2 has the lowest build loading at 0.144. The maximum build loading is 0.933 from HV8. The T indication reliability ranges from 0.176 to 0.898. HV indication reliability ranges from 0.370 to 0.898. The analysis only reveals acceptable outside loading, with numerous indicators exceeding 0.4.

#### 4.3. Discriminant Validity Test

The Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity key appears in Table 4. Bold numbers in the table indicate the greatest indicator value. The HV indicator is 0.738. T = 0.751, SC 0.440.

#### 4.4. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are presented in Table 5. The collinearity value is 2.279 for both human value and talent.

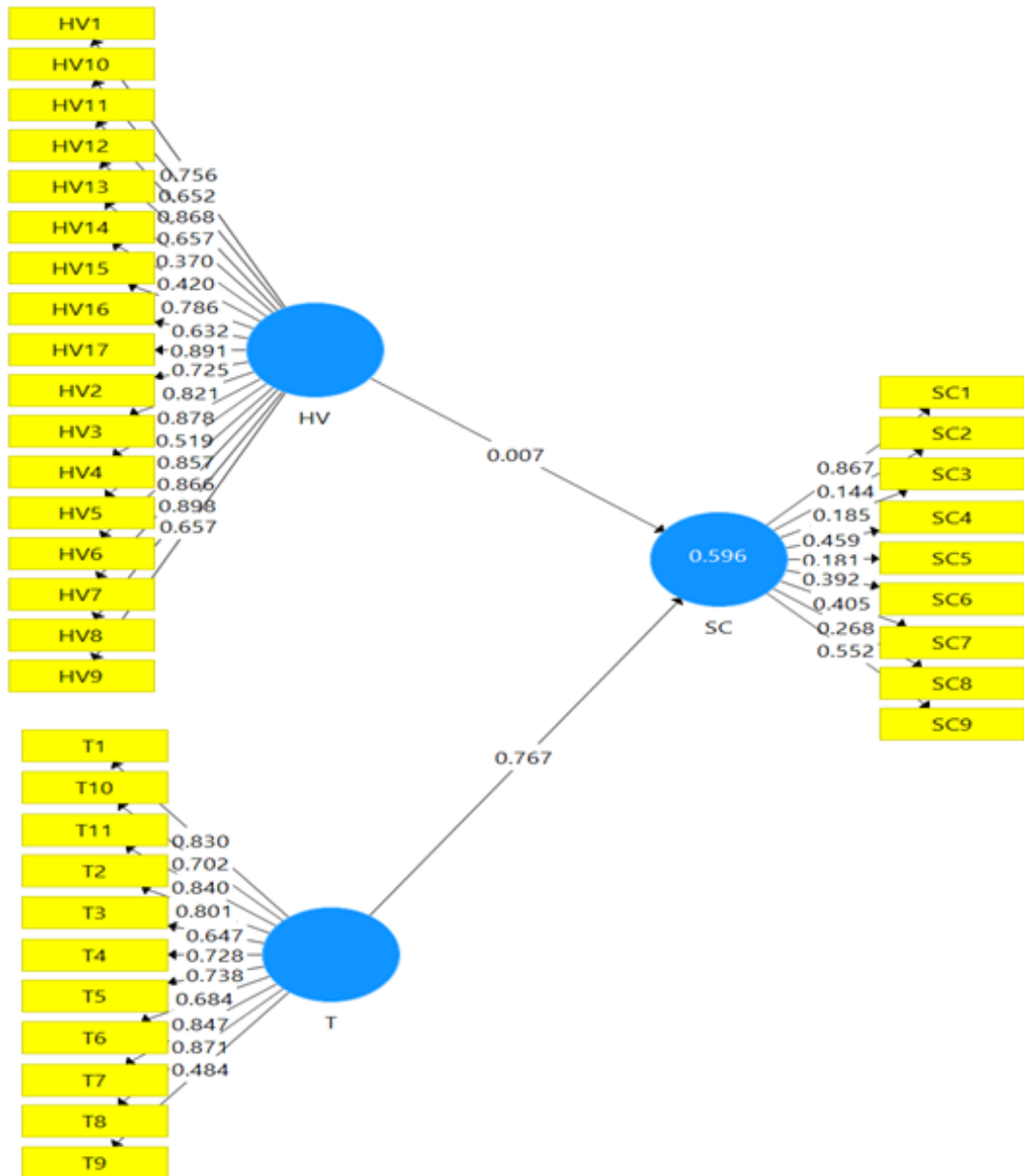


Figure 2. Graphic model indicator reliability – outer loadings.

Table 4. Discriminant validity Fornell Larcker criterion for pilot study.

Construct	HV	SC	T
HV	0.738	0.714	0.733
SC	0.582	0.44	0.42
T	0.749	0.772	0.751

Table 5. Inner VIF values.

Construct	Strategic communication
Human value	2.279
Talent	2.279

Based on Table 5, the collinearity assessment concluded that VIF values are less than five. With a score of 354.573, HV7 has the greatest outer VIF value, and SC9 has the lowest, at 1.379. This means that outer VIF is present in this study.



4.5. Assessing the Effect of R<sup>2</sup>

The R<sup>2</sup> value is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. R square value.

Construct	R square	R square adjusted
Strategic communication	0.596	0.557

According to Table 6, strategic communication's R-squared value is 0.596. This shows that the R<sup>2</sup> of the study is moderate. As a result, the value's significance also indicates that the dependent and independent variable's data points have a moderate relationship with the regression line or each other. Clearly, the independent variable in this study has a marginally significant relationship with the dependent variable, strategic communication.

4.6. Assessing the Effect of f<sup>2</sup>

The f<sup>2</sup> effect size is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The f<sup>2</sup> effect size.

Construct	Strategic communication
Human value	0.000
Talent	0.638

According to the Table 7, the predictive value of the human value on strategic communication has an effect size of 0.000, which indicates that it has a minimal effect. Strategic communication has a talent f<sup>2</sup> effect size of 0.638, which indicates a large effective size. This indicates that there is a moderate possibility that one of the independent constructs would predict strategic communication.

4.7. Path Coefficients

Using the PLS-SEM method, we can infer the proposed relationship between the constructs from the estimates for the structural model relationship (the path coefficients). The researcher can get the standard report to use for calculating path coefficients. After examining their significance, major connections must be considered for their relevance. Their size may be too small to warrant management's attention, even if the path coefficient in the structural model is significant (Bell, 2018). These coefficients represent the estimated shift in the dependent construct for every shift in the predictor construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). For a one-tailed test, the critical values are 1.65 (at the 10% level), 1.96 (at the 5% level), and 2.57 (at the 1% level) (Hair et al., 2017). In this analysis, a 5% level of significance is used. Table 8 displays the indicators' path coefficients.

Table 8. Path coefficients.

Construct	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
HV -> SC	0.007	0.124	0.355	0.021	0.983
T -> SC	0.767	0.471	0.443	1.730	0.084

According to the data presented in Table 8, which examines the relative importance of the independent constructs in predicting the dependent construct, the most significant element is Talent (1.730), followed by Human Value (0.021).

4.8. Hypothesis Test Results

H: Talent influences Strategic Communication.



The result of the H1 statistic is that the  $\beta$  value is 0.767, the t value is 1.730, and the p-value is 0.084. It did not meet the benchmark where the t value is less than 1.96. The p-value is less than 0.05. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Human Values influence Strategic Communication.*

The result of the H2 statistic is that the  $\beta$  value is 0.007, the t value is 0.021, and the p-value is 0.983. It did not meet the benchmark where the t value is less than 1.96 and the p-value is more than 0.05. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Research, especially in the social sciences, frequently employs pilot studies to assess a research design's viability and validity and hone it for future investigations. Because of the limited sample size used in most pilot studies, generalizations about the population from which the sample was drawn are often impossible. Pilot studies, like the one referenced in the prompt, which looked into the connection between talent, human value, and strategic communication, have limitations that must be considered when interpreting their findings.

The idea that a person's talents and worth as a human being can affect their communication style and the messages they deliver is an intriguing one. The findings of the pilot study did not support this hypothesis, which may have been due to the relatively small sample size of 24 participants. The results might not be generalizable to the entire population if only a few people were surveyed. Therefore, it is possible that the correlation between talent, human value, and strategic communication observed in the paper is not representative of the general population. Additionally, it is more likely that random factors like chance will skew results when working with a small sample size. For instance, it's possible that the small sample size in the paper prevented the detection of a correlation between talent, human value, and strategic communication.

The effect of sample characteristics on the results is another consideration. To determine whether or not a complete study will be successful, pilot projects are often conducted to test out different aspects of the recruitment process, which is especially crucial for projects that aim to learn more about intangible concepts like talent and human worth. Possible bias in the results can be attributed to the fact that the pilot study's participants may not have been representative of the general public. For example, if the sample was made up of people with similar life experiences and backgrounds, there might be less variation in their communication styles and messages, affecting the results.

In addition, the paper did not disclose how talent, human value, and strategic communication were evaluated. Possibly unreliable or invalid measures undermined the validity of the overall study. In addition, the study did not specify the setting where the conversations occurred. The fact that various communication strategies are more or less effective depending on the context and target audience may have had an impact on the results.

In conclusion, the results of the paper provide evidence against the null hypothesis that talent and human value affect strategic communication. However, the study's limitations, such as its small sample size and potential confounding factors, highlight the need for additional research with a more extensive and diverse sample, more robust measures, and detailed information about the context in which communication occurs. This study's comprehensive picture of the relationship between personality traits and communication could be useful for potentially important fields like marketing, public relations, and leadership.

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**Transparency:** The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Authors' Contributions:** All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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