



PRINCIPAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN A REMOTE INDONESIAN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the principal's communication strategies for enhancing teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia, Lanny Jaya Regency, Highland Papua Province. The study focuses on the principal's verbal and nonverbal communication, openness and transparency in managerial information, interpersonal communication, and the development of a cohesive teacher team through participatory, collaborative, and problem-solving-oriented approaches. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving the principal, three subject teachers, a school operator, and a school committee representative as participants. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that the principal effectively performed leadership roles across various dimensions of communication and school management. The principal communicated instructions clearly, consistently, and comprehensibly through both verbal and nonverbal communication while fostering a supportive working environment. Practices of transparency and openness in information sharing strengthened trust among school members and the school committee, whereas empathetic and supportive interpersonal communication contributed positively to the school climate. Furthermore, the principal successfully developed a cohesive teacher team through collaboration, participatory decision-making, and effective coordination, fostering a strong sense of togetherness, collective responsibility, and shared commitment to achieving the school's goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental pillars for improving the quality of human resources. Through education, individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values required to respond to continuously evolving social, economic, and technological changes. In the current era of globalization and digital disruption, education is no longer viewed merely as a process of transferring knowledge from teachers to students. Instead, it has become a means of fostering character development, creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative skills that are essential for addressing the challenges of the

twenty-first century. These demands place schools not only as learning institutions but also as organizational environments in which leadership, communication, and collaboration determine how educational goals are translated into everyday practices. Consequently, improving educational quality requires attention not only to teachers' instructional competencies but also to the organizational conditions that support their professional performance.

Within the context of school administration, the principal plays a strategic role as both an educational leader and a school manager. Principals are responsible not only for school administration but also for managing human resources and creating a conducive working environment that supports the improvement of teaching and learning quality. One of the essential competencies required of principals is the ability to establish effective organizational communication with teachers and educational staff. Organizational communication enables organizational members to exchange information, coordinate activities, interpret policies, and develop shared understandings of organizational goals. Recent research demonstrates that school leadership is closely connected to teacher collaboration, professional learning, organizational trust, and professional engagement. For example, Sehgal et al. (2017) show that teacher effectiveness is associated with the interaction of self-efficacy, collaboration, and principal leadership, while Hsieh et al. (2023) demonstrate that school leadership can influence teacher professional collaboration. Similarly, Dutta & Sahney (2021) identify relationships among principal instructional leadership, school climate, teacher job performance, and student achievement. A systematic review by Mayasari (2021) further indicates that principal leadership has important implications for teacher outcomes, although the pathways through which leadership influences teachers are multidimensional rather than uniformly direct. From this perspective, communication is not merely an administrative mechanism for delivering instructions; it is a leadership process through which principals shape relationships, participation, trust, coordination, and collective professional action within schools.

Existing studies provide important evidence regarding the relational dimension of school leadership. Open and authentic dialogue between teachers and school management can create opportunities for information exchange and greater teacher involvement in organizational processes (Klein, 2017). The quality of headteacher–teacher relationships has also been associated with teachers' trust in school leadership (Musah et al., 2018). Similarly, research by 陳文彥 & 潘慧玲 (2019) indicates that trust can play an important role in the relationship between principal leadership and teacher leadership, while Kars & Inandı (2018) demonstrate a relationship between principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' organizational trust. These findings suggest that communication should be examined not only as information transmission but also as a relational process through which school leaders develop trust, encourage participation, and create conditions for teachers to engage in professional activities.

Transparency represents another important dimension of organizational communication. Jiang & Luo (2018) demonstrate that authenticity and transparency in organizational communication are related to employee trust and engagement, while Yue et al. (2019) show that transparent communication is associated with openness to organizational change through the mediating role of trust. Pološki Vokić et al. (2020) similarly emphasize the role of internal communication in building organizational trust. In the school context, transparency may therefore be particularly important because teachers need to understand not only what decisions have been made but also the information and considerations underlying those decisions. Transparent communication can consequently provide a basis for reducing uncertainty, clarifying responsibilities, and supporting organizational engagement.

The collaborative dimension of leadership has also received increasing attention. Distributed leadership has been associated with professional collaboration and teachers' job satisfaction (Torres, 2019), while co-creating leadership can support teacher professional learning communities, with teacher trust playing an important mediating role in this relationship (Yi-Ku et al., 2019). Warwas et al. (2019) similarly emphasize the importance of supportive leadership for the functioning of professional learning communities. Research by Park & Byun (2020) indicates that principal support and professional learning communities are associated with group-level teacher expectations, while Park et al. (2018) highlight the importance of principal support, professional learning communities, and collective responsibility as school-level mechanisms related to educational outcomes. More recent research also suggests that distributed leadership can facilitate a collaborative spirit within teacher teams (de Jong et al., 2023), while leadership practices have been shown to influence teacher collaboration through organizational and professional mechanisms (Ma & Marion, 2024). These findings indicate that participation and collaboration are not separate from leadership communication but can constitute important mechanisms through which leadership practices are translated into collective professional activity.

The principal's communication strategy is closely associated with teacher performance because teachers are the primary actors in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are expected not only to master subject content but also to

demonstrate pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. Leadership communication can support these expectations by providing teachers with clear directions, opportunities to participate in decision-making, feedback, emotional support, and access to information required to perform their responsibilities. Sehgal et al. (2017) demonstrate that teacher effectiveness is associated with the interaction of teacher self-efficacy, professional collaboration, and principal leadership, suggesting that leadership contributes to teacher effectiveness through interconnected professional processes. More recent evidence also indicates that school leadership can be associated with teachers' instructional quality and professional collaboration, although these relationships may operate through organizational and relational mechanisms rather than through leadership alone (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Hsieh et al., 2023). Previous scholarship on school leadership has consistently emphasized the importance of leadership practices that strengthen teacher collaboration, professional capacity, trust, and organizational commitment (Harris, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008). Thus, the relationship between principal communication and teacher performance should be understood as a multidimensional process involving instructional coordination, interpersonal relationships, information transparency, and collaborative decision-making rather than simply the transmission of managerial instructions.

Existing studies have provided important evidence regarding these dimensions of school leadership. Research on successful school leadership has highlighted the importance of trust, collaboration, distributed leadership, and the development of professional capacity in improving school effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2008; Harris, 2003). Similarly, studies of organizational communication emphasize that effective communication can strengthen coordination, interpersonal relationships, employee engagement, and organizational functioning (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015). Research concerning leadership and teacher collaboration also indicates that supportive leadership practices can encourage teachers to work collectively and contribute to school improvement (Sebastian et al., 2016). These studies establish that communication is an important component of effective school leadership and that leadership practices can shape teachers' professional experiences and organizational participation.

However, the existing literature leaves several aspects insufficiently explained. First, although previous studies have established relationships among principal leadership, teacher collaboration, trust, school climate, and teacher performance, less is known about how these processes operate in geographically remote and infrastructurally constrained schools. Research on school conditions for teachers' professional learning in Indonesia shows that teachers' professional development is shaped by the broader conditions in which schools operate (Rahman, 2022). Similarly, Lessy et al. (2022) demonstrate how communication practices can support a transition toward more allocative or distributed leadership in an Indonesian school context. Sandy (2024) also highlights the importance of communication, collaboration, support, and adaptive leadership in Indonesian schools facing complex organizational challenges. However, these studies do not specifically explain how multiple dimensions of principal communication are integrated in the everyday management of a remote school in Highland Papua.

Second, rural and geographically disadvantaged schools face leadership challenges that may differ from those encountered in more accessible educational settings. Salifu & Kala (2024), for example, identify leadership challenges associated with improving pupil performance in rural schools, highlighting the importance of contextual constraints in understanding school leadership. More recent research in rural school settings also emphasizes trust, cooperation, teamwork, and flexible leadership practices as important conditions for school success (Grimm et al., 2025). These findings suggest that leadership communication needs to be examined in relation to the material, geographical, and organizational conditions surrounding schools rather than being treated as a context-independent practice.

Third, previous studies tend to examine leadership effectiveness, teacher collaboration, or organizational communication as relatively broad constructs, providing less detailed understanding of how specific communication practices—such as verbal and nonverbal communication, transparency in managerial information, interpersonal and emotional support, and participatory team building—are combined in the daily leadership practices of principals. This gap is particularly relevant because evidence from Asian educational contexts indicates that instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, commitment, and school climate are associated with teacher job satisfaction and performance (Habibi et al., 2025). Thus, examining communication as an integrated leadership practice may provide a more context-sensitive understanding of the organizational processes surrounding teacher performance.

This contextual gap is important because geographical isolation, limited transportation, restricted technological access, and infrastructural constraints can shape the ways school leaders communicate, coordinate teachers, distribute information, and maintain professional relationships. Communication strategies that may function effectively in urban or well-connected schools cannot necessarily be assumed to operate in the same manner in remote schools. In such settings,

principals may need to rely more heavily on direct interpersonal communication, repeated clarification of instructions, face-to-face coordination, relational approaches, and participatory decision-making to maintain teacher engagement and organizational cohesion. Therefore, examining communication within its specific geographical and organizational context is necessary to understand how school leadership contributes to teacher performance under conditions of limited resources.

Within the Indonesian educational context, this issue is particularly relevant to schools located in Papua's mountainous and remote areas. Highland Papua, particularly Lanny Jaya Regency, faces numerous challenges in providing quality education. Difficult geographical conditions, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to technology may constrain the implementation of teaching and learning activities as well as organizational coordination. These conditions make the principal's communication role more complex because the principal must maintain teacher coordination, provide instructional direction, distribute managerial information, respond to teachers' difficulties, and sustain collective commitment despite limitations in physical and technological connectivity. SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia in Lanny Jaya Regency represents such a context. Rather than assuming that communication strategies developed in other educational settings can be directly transferred to this context, it is necessary to examine empirically how communication is actually practiced by the principal and how teachers and other school stakeholders perceive these practices.

Accordingly, the research gap addressed in this study lies not simply in the geographical absence of previous research, but in the limited empirical explanation of how multiple dimensions of principal communication are integrated to support teacher performance in a remote Indonesian school. Specifically, this study examines four interconnected dimensions: (1) the principal's verbal and nonverbal communication in delivering instructions and coordinating school activities; (2) transparency and openness in managerial and institutional information; (3) interpersonal communication and emotional support for teachers and staff; and (4) the principal's role in developing a cohesive teacher team through participation, collaboration, and collective decision-making. By examining these dimensions within the specific context of SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia, this study seeks to extend existing discussions of school leadership by showing how communication strategies are enacted under the geographical, infrastructural, and organizational conditions of a remote school in Highland Papua.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the principal's communication strategies for enhancing teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia, Lanny Jaya Regency, Highland Papua Province. The study contributes empirically by providing a context-specific account of principal communication in a remote 3T school and contributes conceptually by connecting communication practices, interpersonal support, transparency, and participatory team building within a single analytical framework. The findings are expected to contribute to educational management scholarship and provide practical insights for strengthening school leadership and teacher performance in geographically challenging educational settings in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia, located in Gamelia District, Lanny Jaya Regency, Highland Papua Province, Indonesia. The research site was purposively selected because the school is situated in a mountainous region with limited transportation access and is classified as part of Indonesia's 3T (terdepan, terluar, dan tertinggal; frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped) areas. The selection of this site was based on its relevance to the research problem, particularly the need to understand how school principals develop and implement communication strategies in an educational environment characterized by geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to communication technology. These contextual characteristics provide an important setting for examining the relationship between leadership communication and teacher performance.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the principal's communication strategies for enhancing teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia. The descriptive qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to describe and interpret naturally occurring communication practices, participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the school context rather than to test a predetermined causal relationship between variables. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the phenomenon holistically by examining participants' experiences, perspectives, and naturally occurring practices within the school setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Moleong, 2017; Tisdell et al., 2025).

Participants and Sampling

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby individuals were intentionally chosen based on their direct involvement and knowledge of communication and school management practices. A total of six participants were involved in the study, consisting of one school principal, three subject teachers, one school operator, and one school committee representative. The principal was selected as the primary informant because of his/her direct responsibility for planning, implementing, and coordinating school leadership and communication practices. The three subject teachers were selected because they directly experienced the principal's communication practices in instructional, administrative, and collaborative activities. The school operator was included because of his/her involvement in administrative coordination and the dissemination of institutional information, while the school committee representative was included to provide a stakeholder perspective regarding school governance, transparency, and communication between the school and the community.

The selection of participants was based on three criteria: (1) direct involvement in school activities and organizational communication; (2) sufficient knowledge or experience regarding the principal's communication practices; and (3) willingness to participate in the research and provide information based on their experiences. The inclusion of participants with different roles was intended to obtain diverse perspectives and reduce reliance on information from a single organizational position.

To protect participants' privacy, the participants were not identified by their personal names in the presentation of the findings. Instead, participant codes were used to distinguish the sources of information, such as P1 for the principal, T1–T3 for the three teachers, O1 for the school operator, and C1 for the school committee representative.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation was conducted to examine directly the interactions and communication practices between the principal and teachers during school activities. The observations focused on communication behaviors relevant to the research objectives, including the clarity of instructions, interaction patterns, responses to teachers' concerns, participation in discussions, coordination of school activities, and verbal and nonverbal communication practices. Field notes were used to record relevant events, interactions, and contextual information observed during the research process.

In-depth interviews were conducted with all six participants to obtain comprehensive information regarding their experiences, perceptions, and observations of leadership communication practices within the school. The interviews were guided by questions covering four major areas: (1) verbal and nonverbal communication used by the principal; (2) openness and transparency in sharing managerial and institutional information; (3) interpersonal communication, emotional support, and responsiveness to teachers' concerns; and (4) participatory communication and coordination in building a cohesive teacher team. Follow-up questions were used when necessary to clarify participants' responses and obtain more detailed descriptions of specific communication experiences.

Before each interview, the researchers explained the purpose of the study, the type of information required, the voluntary nature of participation, and the participants' right to decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study. With participants' permission, interview information was documented for analysis. The researchers also ensured that information obtained from the participants was used solely for research purposes and that personal identities were not disclosed in the reporting of the findings.

In addition, document analysis was conducted by reviewing various school management documents, including work programs, meeting minutes, and other administrative records relevant to the objectives of this study. The documents were used primarily to corroborate information obtained through interviews and observations, particularly information concerning school programs, task allocation, meetings, communication procedures, and managerial decision-making. Only documents relevant to the research questions and accessible with institutional permission were included in the analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the data collection and interpretation process rather than being performed only after all data had been collected. The analytical process consisted of three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, coding, and simplifying the information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. During this stage, the researchers identified statements and observations related to the four analytical dimensions of the study: principal communication practices, information transparency, interpersonal and

emotional support, and participatory team building. Relevant information was grouped according to emerging patterns while information that was unrelated to the research questions was excluded from the core analysis.

Subsequently, the data were organized and presented in a narrative format to facilitate the identification of patterns, relationships, similarities, and differences among the findings from different participants and data sources. The researchers compared information obtained from the principal with the perspectives of teachers, the school operator, and the school committee representative to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Finally, conclusions were continuously drawn and verified throughout the research process to ensure the consistency and credibility of the study's findings. Interpretations were reviewed against the available interview, observation, and documentary evidence before being incorporated into the final findings.

Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, including the principal, teachers, school operator, and school committee representative. This process was intended to determine whether descriptions of the principal's communication practices were consistently reported across different organizational positions. Methodological triangulation was performed by comparing data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis.

Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the findings was established by applying the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods and through repeated examination of the consistency of the emerging findings. Transferability was supported by providing a sufficiently detailed description of the research setting, participants, and contextual conditions of the school. Dependability was addressed by maintaining consistency in the data collection and analysis procedures, while confirmability was supported by grounding interpretations in evidence obtained from multiple participants and data sources.

Ethical considerations were incorporated throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before providing their consent to participate. The researchers maintained the confidentiality of participants' personal information and used participant codes rather than personal names in the analysis and reporting of findings. Data obtained through interviews, observations, and documents were treated as research materials and were used only for the purposes of this study. The researchers also sought the necessary permission from the school and respected participants' rights to refuse to provide information that they considered private or sensitive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Principal's Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

The findings indicate that the principal of SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia used verbal and nonverbal communication as an integral part of school leadership. Communication was conducted through formal and informal interactions, teacher meetings, academic supervision, direct conversations, and internal communication channels. These mechanisms were used to convey school programs, clarify teachers' responsibilities, provide directions, and deliver feedback. The findings therefore suggest that communication functioned not merely as a mechanism for transmitting information but also as a means of establishing shared understanding between the principal and teachers.

The research data indicate that clarity and consistency were important characteristics of the principal's verbal communication. Teachers received explanations concerning school programs, work responsibilities, and changes in activities. When information required clarification, the principal was described as providing additional explanations or repeating important instructions. This practice was particularly relevant in situations involving the distribution of responsibilities and coordination of school activities.

The findings also show that verbal communication was accompanied by nonverbal communication. Observation data indicate the use of eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and a friendly interpersonal manner during interactions. The principal's calm and approachable manner was associated with a more comfortable communication atmosphere, allowing teachers to interact and discuss work-related matters more openly.

These findings are relevant to Bush (2008) argument that educational leadership should be understood in relation to how leaders observe, communicate with, and provide feedback to teachers. However, Bush also cautions that improvements in leadership practices do not necessarily translate automatically into measurable improvements in

teaching. This distinction is important in the present study. The available evidence more directly demonstrates improvements in role clarity, understanding of responsibilities, coordination, and interpersonal interaction than objective improvements in teaching outcomes.

The findings therefore suggest that verbal and nonverbal communication created conditions that supported teacher performance rather than independently determining it. Clear instructions may help teachers understand what is expected of them, while supportive nonverbal communication may reduce interpersonal barriers to discussion and feedback. In this sense, communication operates through an intermediate process: the principal communicates expectations, teachers develop greater clarity regarding their responsibilities, and this clarity supports the implementation of professional duties.

This interpretation is also consistent with the broader literature on leadership communication, which emphasizes that communication effectiveness depends not only on the content of messages but also on the relational context in which messages are delivered. The present study extends this perspective to a geographically challenging school environment, where direct interpersonal communication remains particularly important for clarifying information and maintaining coordination.

Importantly, the findings do not justify the conclusion that all teachers experienced the communication strategy in exactly the same way. The thesis identifies differences in teacher background and competence as one of the contextual challenges affecting school management. Consequently, the effectiveness of communication should be understood as context-dependent rather than universally uniform.

Communication Transparency and Information Openness

The second major finding concerns transparency and openness in the communication of school policies, work responsibilities, programs, and administrative matters. The research data indicate that the principal attempted to provide explanations concerning decisions that affected teachers' duties. Information was communicated through meetings, direct interactions, and internal communication channels.

Transparency in this study was not limited to informing teachers about decisions. The principal also provided opportunities for teachers to understand the reasons behind decisions, ask questions, and express their views. This approach contributed to greater clarity concerning work responsibilities and helped reduce the possibility of misunderstanding during the implementation of school activities.

The findings are conceptually consistent with research emphasizing the importance of transparent internal communication in building trust and reducing uncertainty. Noro et al. (2024), for example, found that transparent communication was positively associated with organizational trust, which subsequently related to employees' openness to organizational change. Similarly, research on transparent internal communication identifies informational, participatory, and accountable dimensions as important mechanisms for helping organizational members understand situations and reduce uncertainty.

However, the present study should not be interpreted as demonstrating the same causal mechanism quantitatively. The data available from the thesis indicate that transparency was perceived as useful for role clarity, preparedness, and coordination, but they do not provide longitudinal measures of trust or performance that would permit a causal test. Therefore, the contribution of transparency is better interpreted as reducing ambiguity and supporting accountability.

This distinction is particularly important for interpreting the relationship between information openness and teacher performance. When teachers understand decisions, responsibilities, and school procedures, they may be better prepared to perform their assigned tasks. Nevertheless, understanding a task does not itself constitute evidence that the task was performed at a higher level.

The use of internal digital communication, including WhatsApp, should also be interpreted cautiously. Digital communication can facilitate rapid information dissemination and feedback, but its effectiveness depends on access, connectivity, and the ability of recipients to receive and respond to information. The available thesis data do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that digital communication was consistently effective under all circumstances. Consequently, direct meetings and interpersonal communication remained important complementary mechanisms.

This finding contributes to the understanding of leadership communication in a 3T-like geographical context by showing that transparency needs to be accompanied by opportunities for clarification and dialogue. Information availability alone is insufficient when organizational members require contextual explanation and interpersonal interaction to translate information into action.

Interpersonal Communication and Emotional Support

The third theme concerns interpersonal communication and emotional support. The research findings indicate that the principal's communication with teachers extended beyond administrative instructions. The principal provided encouragement, appreciation, motivation, and opportunities for teachers to discuss professional difficulties. The available data also indicate that the principal attempted to listen to teachers' concerns before providing direction or guidance.

This interpersonal approach contributed to a communication climate characterized by openness and psychological comfort. Teachers were encouraged to discuss challenges and receive support when facing difficulties in carrying out their responsibilities. The principal's use of motivational messages and appreciation also functioned as a form of positive reinforcement.

The findings have relevance to the literature on leadership communication and organizational relationships. Research by Noro et al. (2024) demonstrates that symmetrical internal communication and leaders' motivating language can contribute to a positive emotional culture, which in turn is related to employees' organizational identification. Similarly, Noro et al. (2024) show that leadership communication characterized by envisioning, energizing, and enabling behaviors can be associated with trust and supportive behavioral responses.

The present findings are consistent with these perspectives, but they also require a more cautious interpretation. The thesis data demonstrate that interpersonal communication was associated with motivation, professional commitment, confidence, and willingness to participate. These dimensions are important organizational conditions for teacher performance, but they should not automatically be equated with improved instructional performance.

This distinction addresses an important issue raised by the study: whether communication actually improved teacher performance or primarily improved teachers' perceptions of leadership. Based on the available evidence, the strongest conclusion is that interpersonal communication supported professional engagement and the conditions surrounding teacher performance. The evidence is less conclusive regarding direct improvements in classroom effectiveness.

Therefore, the contribution of emotional support can be conceptualized as indirect. Supportive communication may strengthen teachers' willingness to perform responsibilities, communicate difficulties, and participate in collective activities. However, instructional performance is also dependent on professional competence, infrastructure, teaching resources, supervision, and contextual working conditions.

The thesis identifies facilities and infrastructure, geographical accessibility, and differences in teacher background and competence as barriers. These findings qualify the positive interpretation of interpersonal support. A supportive principal-teacher relationship can help teachers cope with challenges, but it cannot independently eliminate structural constraints.

Participatory Communication and Team Building

The fourth finding concerns participatory communication and team building. The research data indicate that the principal used teacher meetings, deliberation, discussion, and collaborative problem solving to involve teachers in school-related activities. Teachers were provided opportunities to express opinions and suggestions, particularly in relation to work distribution, instructional activities, extracurricular programs, and other school matters.

Participatory communication transformed leadership communication from a predominantly one-way process into a more interactive process. Teachers were not only recipients of information but were also positioned as participants in organizational discussions. This mechanism helped strengthen coordination and collective responsibility.

The finding is compatible with contemporary perspectives on collaborative educational leadership, in which leadership effectiveness depends partly on the capacity to engage teachers in organizational processes. However, the present findings provide an important contextual qualification. Participation in this study was primarily enacted through meetings, direct discussion, deliberation, and problem solving rather than through highly formalized participatory structures.

The findings suggest that participatory communication was associated particularly with collaboration, coordination, and shared responsibility. These are important dimensions of contextual teacher performance because teaching in a school organization involves not only individual classroom responsibilities but also cooperation with colleagues and participation in institutional activities.

Nevertheless, the data do not establish that all teachers participated equally or that participation always influenced final decisions. The thesis provides evidence that teachers were given opportunities to contribute, but it does not provide sufficient comparative data to measure differences in participation among teachers. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to characterize the leadership process as fully democratic based solely on the available evidence.

This limitation is important because participatory communication can create opportunities for involvement without necessarily producing equal influence. The contribution of participation in this study should therefore be understood primarily in terms of communication, coordination, and collective responsibility, rather than as evidence of complete shared governance.

Teacher Performance Reflected in the Findings

The findings concerning teacher performance require explicit operational clarification. Based on the research data presented in the thesis, teacher performance was reflected in several areas: discipline and attendance, responsibility in lesson preparation and implementation, motivation and professional commitment, and collaboration.

First, the thesis reports that the principal's communication strategy was associated with teacher discipline and attendance. Clear directions, monitoring, motivation, and interpersonal interaction were described as supporting teachers' attention to their professional responsibilities. However, the article does not present longitudinal attendance statistics or before-and-after comparisons. The finding should therefore be reported as a qualitative indication of perceived or observed improvement rather than as a quantitatively demonstrated increase.

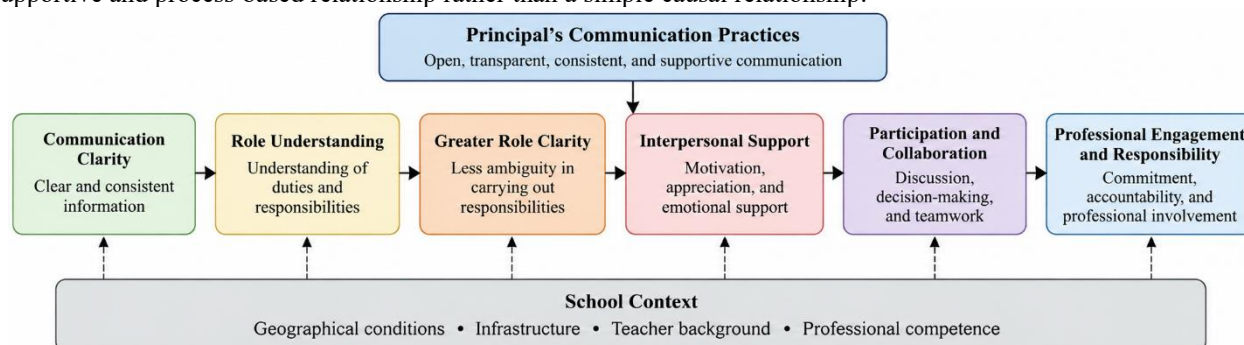
Second, teacher performance was reflected in responsibility for lesson preparation and implementation. The principal provided guidance and supervision related to teachers' instructional duties. Communication therefore served as a mechanism through which teachers received direction and feedback concerning learning activities. Nevertheless, the available data do not provide sufficiently detailed measurements of lesson-plan quality, classroom observation scores, or student learning outcomes to establish the magnitude of improvement.

Third, teacher performance was reflected in motivation and professional commitment. The principal's motivational communication, appreciation, and emotional support were associated with teachers' willingness to perform their responsibilities. This finding is compatible with the literature showing that motivating leadership communication can influence positive organizational attitudes and identification. Yet motivation remains an antecedent or supporting condition of performance rather than a direct performance measure.

Fourth, teacher performance was reflected in collaboration. Regular meetings, deliberation, and collective problem solving created opportunities for teachers to coordinate responsibilities and work together. Compared with the other dimensions, this finding provides relatively clear qualitative evidence of contextual performance because collaboration was directly embedded in school activities.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the principal's communication strategy supported several dimensions associated with teacher performance. The strongest evidence concerns role clarity, professional responsibility, motivation, coordination, and collaboration. The evidence is less sufficient for demonstrating direct changes in measurable instructional outcomes.

Accordingly, the relationship between communication and teacher performance is better conceptualized as a supportive and process-based relationship rather than a simple causal relationship:



Source: Author's analysis based on the research findings.

Figure 1. Qualitative Model of the Principal's Communication Practices Supporting Teacher Performance

Note: The figure illustrates the process identified from the qualitative findings, in which communication clarity facilitates role understanding and reduces uncertainty, while interpersonal support, participation, and collaboration contribute to teachers' professional engagement and responsibility within the school context.

This interpretation is particularly important in qualitative research because perceived improvements in leadership communication should not automatically be presented as objective improvements in performance. Bush (2008) similarly highlights the distinction between perceived improvements in leadership practice and measurable changes in teaching.

Critical Discussion: Does Communication Really Improve Teacher Performance?

The central finding of this study is that communication was an important component of the principal's leadership practice, but the evidence does not support the claim that communication alone caused improvements in teacher performance.

The data demonstrate that communication was associated with several mechanisms that are theoretically relevant to performance. Clear instructions supported understanding of responsibilities. Transparency reduced ambiguity. Emotional support contributed to motivation and professional engagement. Participatory communication strengthened coordination and collaboration. These mechanisms provide a plausible explanation of how communication can support teacher performance.

However, the distinction between communication outcomes and performance outcomes must be maintained. Teachers may feel more motivated, trusted, or comfortable without necessarily demonstrating measurable improvements in classroom instruction. Likewise, effective coordination does not necessarily guarantee improvements in student learning. Therefore, the positive findings should not be overstated.

This critical interpretation is supported by Bush (2008), whose discussion of educational leadership cautions against assuming that perceived improvements in leadership observation and feedback automatically translate into measurable teaching improvements. The present study similarly suggests that communication functions as an enabling mechanism rather than a sufficient condition for teacher performance.

The geographical and organizational context further reinforces this conclusion. The thesis identifies infrastructure limitations, geographical accessibility, and differences in teacher background and competence as challenges. These factors indicate that the effectiveness of leadership communication depends on the wider organizational environment. Communication can clarify expectations and provide motivation, but it cannot by itself resolve shortages of facilities, accessibility constraints, or differences in professional competence.

The findings also raise the issue of whether all teachers benefit equally from the principal's communication strategy. The available data do not provide sufficient evidence to establish uniform effects across teachers. Differences in professional background and competence may influence how teachers interpret instructions, respond to feedback, and use available support. This issue should therefore be acknowledged as a contextual limitation rather than treated as a proven difference among participants.

The same caution applies to digital communication. Although internal communication channels such as WhatsApp can facilitate information sharing, their effectiveness should be considered in relation to infrastructure and connectivity. The available evidence does not permit a categorical conclusion that digital communication was either universally effective or ineffective. Instead, the findings suggest that digital communication should complement rather than replace direct interpersonal communication.

Theoretical and Contextual Interpretation

The findings can be interpreted through four interconnected dimensions of leadership communication. First, clarity enables teachers to understand expectations and responsibilities. Second, transparency reduces uncertainty and strengthens organizational accountability. Third, interpersonal support contributes to motivation and relational trust. Fourth, participation strengthens collaboration and shared responsibility.

The literature on internal communication supports this integrated interpretation. Noro et al. (2024) demonstrate that symmetrical internal communication and motivating language can contribute to positive emotional conditions and organizational identification. Research on transparent communication likewise emphasizes the importance of information quality, participation, and accountability in reducing uncertainty and strengthening organizational relationships.

However, the contextual contribution of the present study lies in showing how these communication dimensions operate in a school located in a geographically challenging environment. In such a context, communication is not simply a managerial instrument for delivering policies. It also functions as a mechanism for maintaining interpersonal relationships, coordinating activities, supporting teachers emotionally, and adapting leadership practices to contextual constraints.

Thus, the study extends the discussion of principal communication by emphasizing context-sensitive communication. The effectiveness of communication depends not only on whether information is delivered but also on

whether teachers have opportunities to clarify information, participate in discussion, receive interpersonal support, and coordinate their responsibilities with colleagues.

Overall Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the study identifies four interconnected communication practices: verbal and nonverbal communication, transparency and information openness, interpersonal communication and emotional support, and participatory communication and team building.

Verbal and nonverbal communication primarily supported clarity and understanding. Transparency supported information access, role clarity, and accountability. Interpersonal communication supported motivation, professional engagement, and relational support. Participatory communication supported collaboration, coordination, and shared responsibility.

These dimensions collectively created a communication environment that supported teachers in performing their professional roles. The findings therefore indicate that the principal's communication strategy contributed to the organizational and relational conditions surrounding teacher performance.

Nevertheless, the findings do not demonstrate a direct causal effect of communication on teacher performance. The evidence is primarily qualitative and based on interviews, observations, and available school documentation. The study does not provide longitudinal quantitative measurements that could demonstrate the magnitude of performance change attributable specifically to the principal's communication strategy.

The principal's communication strategy should therefore be understood as one component of a broader leadership and school-management system. Its contribution lies in creating clarity, openness, emotional support, participation, and collaboration, which in turn can support teachers' professional responsibility and engagement.

The central implication of the findings is consequently not that communication automatically improves teacher performance, but that context-sensitive and participatory leadership communication can create organizational conditions that support teacher performance, particularly in terms of role clarity, professional responsibility, motivation, coordination, and collaboration. The strength of this contribution, however, remains dependent on contextual conditions such as infrastructure, geographical accessibility, teacher competence, and the broader organizational environment.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the communication strategies implemented by the principal at SMP Negeri 1 Gamelia were characterized by clear verbal and nonverbal communication, transparency, interpersonal support, and participatory interaction. These practices supported teachers' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, facilitated coordination, encouraged professional engagement, and strengthened collaboration within the school. The findings further indicate that communication was particularly relevant to maintaining teachers' discipline, responsibility in lesson preparation and implementation, professional motivation, and collaborative work.

Rather than demonstrating a direct causal effect, the findings suggest that the principal's communication practices supported teacher performance through interconnected processes of role clarification, reduced ambiguity, interpersonal support, participation, and shared responsibility. This distinction is important because the study did not employ quantitative or longitudinal measures to establish the magnitude of change in teacher performance. The contribution of the study therefore lies in demonstrating how leadership communication can function as an enabling mechanism for professional engagement and responsibility within a geographically challenging school context.

Practically, the findings suggest that principals in geographically disadvantaged or 3T contexts can strengthen school management through communication strategies that are clear, transparent, empathetic, and participatory. Such practices are relatively low-cost and adaptable because they rely substantially on direct interaction, dialogue, meetings, feedback, and relationship building rather than on extensive material resources. Nevertheless, communication cannot substitute for adequate infrastructure, accessibility, professional competence, and other structural conditions that also shape teacher performance.

The study is subject to limitations. It was conducted in a single junior secondary school and relied primarily on qualitative accounts, observations, and available school documentation. The absence of longitudinal quantitative performance measures limits the extent to which changes in teacher performance can be objectively attributed to the principal's communication strategy. The findings should therefore be interpreted as context-specific qualitative evidence rather than as universally generalizable effects. Future research involving multiple schools, longitudinal designs, and

more explicit measures of teacher performance would be valuable for examining whether the communication processes identified in this study operate similarly across different 3T educational settings.

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