



Implementation of Principal's Communication Management in Improving Teacher Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of communication management, communication strategies, supporting factors and communication barriers of school principals in improving teacher performance at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out thematically by grouping based on communication indicators, strategies applied, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The results of the study show that the implementation of communication management of school principals is carried out through the delivery of clear and structured information, routine supervision, and open communication between principals and teachers. Communication strategies implemented include the use of various communication channels, providing constructive feedback, and a personalized approach to increase teacher motivation and engagement. The main supporting factors include information openness, effective communication channels, and motivational support from the principal, while the inhibiting factors include teachers' psychological barriers, unclear messages, and differences in perception that can reduce the effectiveness of communication. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of implementing systematic, adaptive, and participatory communication management to create a conducive work environment, improve teacher professionalism, and improve the quality of learning continuously.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi manajemen komunikasi, strategi komunikasi, faktor pendukung dan penghambat komunikasi Kepala Sekolah dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru di SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan kepala sekolah dan guru, observasi partisipatif, serta studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan pengelompokan berdasarkan indikator komunikasi, strategi yang diterapkan, dan faktor pendukung maupun penghambat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi manajemen komunikasi kepala sekolah dilakukan melalui penyampaian informasi yang jelas dan terstruktur, supervisi rutin, serta komunikasi terbuka



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antara kepala sekolah dan guru. Strategi komunikasi yang diterapkan meliputi penggunaan berbagai saluran komunikasi, pemberian umpan balik konstruktif, dan pendekatan personal untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan guru. Faktor pendukung utama mencakup keterbukaan informasi, saluran komunikasi yang efektif, dan dukungan motivasional dari kepala sekolah, sedangkan faktor penghambat meliputi hambatan psikologis guru, ketidakjelasan pesan, dan perbedaan persepsi yang dapat menurunkan efektivitas komunikasi. Implikasi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penerapan manajemen komunikasi yang sistematis, adaptif, dan partisipatif untuk menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang kondusif, meningkatkan profesionalisme guru, serta memperbaiki kualitas pembelajaran secara berkelanjutan.

Introduction

Teacher performance is one of the main indicators of the quality of education in schools, which is greatly influenced by the quality of the principal's leadership (Jaliah et al., 2020). The role of a principal is not only limited to administration, but also includes the ability to effectively manage organizational communication to motivate and direct teachers (Andila & Nasution, 2025). The development of education management theory emphasizes that the success of schools depends on the development of managerial functions, including communication management, that are adaptive to the needs of teachers and the demands of modern education (Ismail, 2020). Initial observations at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe showed that the principal at the school was a woman. This is important to consider because research shows that communication between men and women can have different characteristics, potentially influencing leadership styles and interactions within organizations.

Research (Neliwati et al., 2024) shows that the principal's communication management has an important role in improving teacher performance. (Zurhidayati & Hendriani, 2024) It found that effective and open communication between principals and teachers is able to increase teacher motivation, responsibility, and professionalism through supportive working relationships. Research results (Syahputra et al., 2024) at SMK PAB 8 Sampali showed that the use of digital communication media, such as WhatsApp groups, allows the delivery of information, instructions, and program evaluation quickly and in two directions, thereby improving coordination, discipline, and work effectiveness of teachers. In addition, it emphasized that the quality of interaction between principals and teachers, which is characterized by participatory and empathetic communication, has a significant effect on creating a conducive work climate and supporting the development of teacher competencies. Thus, the implementation of systematic and adaptive communication management is an important strategy for school principals in improving teacher performance and the quality of education at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe.

The implementation of communication management of school principals plays an important role in improving teacher performance. A leadership style that is predominantly instructive rather than participatory can also limit teachers' openness in

conveying aspirations (Lumban Gaol & Siburian, 2018). Therefore, systematic, adaptive, and participatory communication management is needed to strengthen coordination, interpersonal relationships, and teacher performance on an ongoing basis.

Principal's communication management refers to the principal's ability to plan, implement, and evaluate the communication process with teachers systematically to achieve school goals effectively (Sahputra, 2020). This concept emphasizes the importance of open, participatory, and two-way communication as a leadership strategy that can strengthen coordination, interpersonal relationships, and teacher motivation. With the implementation of effective communication management, teachers not only understand their duties and responsibilities clearly, but are also encouraged to play an active role in decision-making, improve professionalism, and academic and non-academic performance in school. Therefore, the principal's communication management serves as a conceptual foundation to create a conducive, harmonious, and oriented work climate to improve the quality of education at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe.

This study aims to examine the implementation of communication management carried out by school principals in improving teacher performance at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe. This research also aims to analyze the communication strategies implemented by school principals, including planning, implementation, and evaluation of communication, as well as identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in the practice. Thus, this study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the relationship between principals' communication management and improving professionalism and teacher performance, as well as providing practical recommendations for optimizing managerial and leadership functions in schools.

Various studies have discussed the relationship between principals' communication management and teacher performance, but studies that specifically explore the implementation of principals' communication in vocational schools are still limited. This research shows that principals' leadership and effective communication have a significant influence on teacher performance. The results of multiple linear regression analysis showed a strong simultaneous influence, supported by interview findings that confirmed that supportive leadership and open communication increased teacher motivation and professionalism (Zega, 2025). Meanwhile, (Pratama & Setiyadi, 2023) emphasizing that the quality of interaction between the principal and teachers affects the work climate and the effectiveness of the implementation of teachers' duties. These studies have similarities in emphasizing the importance of open and participatory communication to improve teacher performance, but differ in the context and method of implementation, especially related to the use of communication technology in vocational secondary schools.

Based on the existing literature, this study shows that participatory leadership of principals that emphasizes open and collaborative communication significantly improves teacher professionalism (Mufidah et al., 2025). Involving staff in decision-making, providing professional development space, and building a solid team, can create a conducive work environment and improve the overall quality of teaching and education.

The implementation of systematic, adaptive, and participatory communication management is the key to creating a conducive work climate, strengthening motivation, and improving professionalism and teacher performance. This research is important to explore concrete practices at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe, as well as provide recommendations for school principals in optimizing communication as a managerial strategy to improve the quality of education.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, which aims to explore in depth the implementation of communication management of school principals in improving teacher performance at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe. The research informants consist of school principals and teachers who are directly involved in the communication process and the implementation of learning tasks. The research data sources consist of primary data, namely principals and teachers who are directly involved in the communication process and implementation of learning tasks, as well as secondary data, obtained from documents, reports, archives, and literature related to principals' communication management practices and teacher performance. The determination of informants is carried out based on data needs related to the theme of communication management and teacher performance improvement, so that the results of the research can provide a deep and accurate understanding of strategies, supporting factors, and obstacles in the implementation of communication management in schools.

This research was conducted at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe with data collection techniques that included semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with principals and teachers to explore experiences, strategies, and obstacles in the implementation of communication management. Observations are made to see firsthand the interaction and practice of communication in the school environment, while documentation includes notes, reports, and archives relevant to the communication process and teacher performance. The data processing stage is carried out through data reduction, including interview transcription, coding, and grouping of data by theme. Furthermore, the data were analyzed thematically and comparatively, by comparing the findings of this study with previous literature and research, both in line with and different, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of communication management of school principals.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study show that one of the main strategies used in improving teacher performance is the provision of clear and structured instruction. The principal explained that every year there are various new programs that must be carried out by the school, and to ensure their implementation, the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe gave an in-depth explanation of the school's regulations and visions and missions to all teachers. One of the programs that is highly emphasized is the implementation of the Teaching Factory, a product-based learning model similar to industrial activities, which aims to enable students to produce products during the learning process. The principal

utilizes the school development team consisting of the vice principal, department head, and laboratory head to assist in the implementation of these programs. The team works collaboratively, supervising teachers who teach productive material in each department. Each teacher must plan and execute product-based learning, and if any do not follow the plan, more in-depth clinical supervision is carried out. In addition, the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe pays special attention to communication with teachers through regular meetings held every month.

The principal assessed that open communication is essential to maintain the quality of learning, but acknowledged that there are still some challenges related to the acceptance and participation of teachers in open discussions. To overcome this, the principal takes a more personal approach with teachers who have certain problems, especially related to quality degradation. The principal of SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe realizes that digitalization and changes in the way of communication are challenges in themselves. Some teachers who are not familiar with technology become an obstacle in the implementation of digital programs, although this has begun to be improved by the formation of teacher learning communities that are carried out outside of school hours. Through this program, teachers are invited to continue learning and keep up with the latest teaching methods.

From interviews with teachers, it was revealed that communication carried out by the principal played a very important role in motivating and improving teacher performance. The teacher explained that clear instructions from the principal were very helpful in understanding the tasks that had to be carried out. In addition, the provision of support and feedback provided by the principal, both through WhatsApp groups and in person, also increases the work spirit of teachers. Although communication through WhatsApp groups already exists, where there are several categories of groups such as groups for the teaching and learning process and homeroom groups, teachers feel that not all teachers dare to express their aspirations or opinions in an open forum. Some teachers prefer to express their opinions privately to the principal or through close friends. This indicates a reluctance or discomfort to speak in public, which needs to be addressed in order to communicate more effectively.

The teacher also revealed that the principal strongly supports the activities carried out by teachers, such as participating in competitions or developing teachings. Every two weeks, the principal motivates teachers by responding to the proposed innovations and encouraging teachers to implement them in the classroom. However, there is still a feeling that some teachers are not open to conveying the problems or difficulties they face in teaching. On the other hand, teachers also suggest an increase in more open and more comfortable communication, with a more personalized approach by the principal. This is especially for teachers who feel that they do not have the courage to express their opinions or difficulties in open forums. With a more humanist approach, teachers feel more comfortable speaking and expressing opinions, which will ultimately improve their performance in the classroom.

Overall, the teachers felt that the communication carried out by the principal was helpful in improving performance, but there were challenges related to the openness of teachers in conveying problems and aspirations. A more personalized approach and a safer space to talk are needed for more effective communication.

Implementation of Principal Communication Management in Improving Teacher Performance

Communication management is a process of planning, implementing, and controlling the effective flow of information between individuals or groups in an organization, with the aim of achieving common goals efficiently and effectively (Gregory, 2018; Mustikasari et al., 2022). This includes strategies and tactics in conveying messages, listening, and managing feedback between the parties involved (Taljaard & de Beer, 2019). Communication management in the context of education is a process that focuses on managing the flow of information between principals and teachers to achieve predetermined goals. By definition, communication management is effective information management that ensures that the messages conveyed by the principal can be received, understood, and implemented properly by teachers.

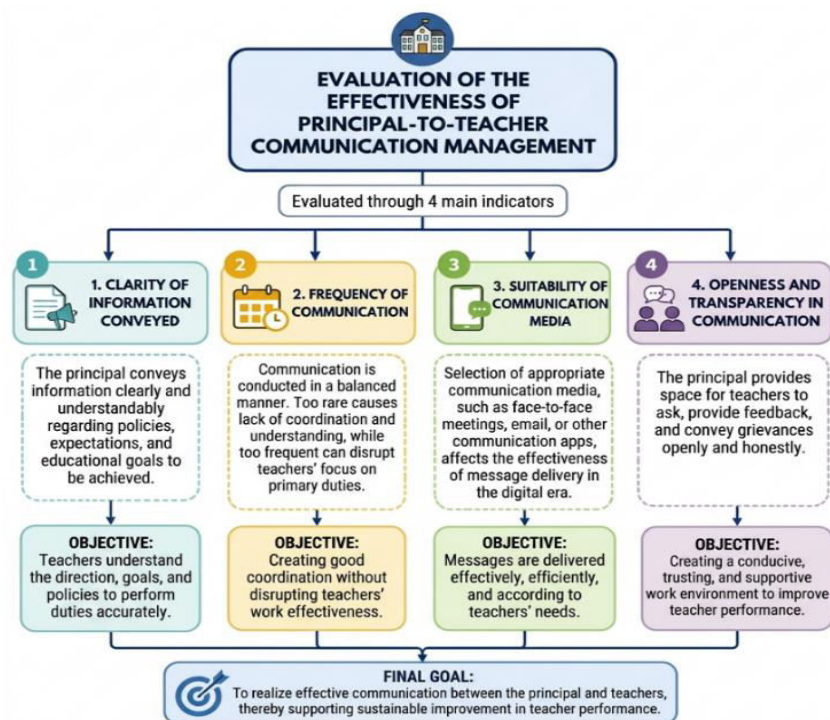


Figure 1. Concept Map for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Communication Management of School Principals to Teachers

To evaluate the effectiveness of communication management of school principals, there are several indicators that need to be considered. First, the clarity of the information conveyed. The principal must be able to convey information clearly and easily understood by teachers, especially related to the policies, expectations, and educational goals to be achieved (Octaviarnis, 2021). Second, the frequency of communication carried out. Too little communication can result in a lack of coordination and understanding between the

principal and the teacher. On the other hand, communication that is too frequent can interfere with the teacher's performance in carrying out his main duties. Therefore, a balance in the frequency of communication is essential. Third, the compatibility of the communication media used. In the digital age, the selection of the right communication medium, such as face-to-face meetings, emails, or other communication applications, can affect the effectiveness of message delivery (Yusuf et al., 2023). Fourth, openness and transparency in communication are also important indicators. Principals who can provide space for teachers to ask questions, provide input, and submit complaints will create a more conducive work atmosphere and support the improvement of teacher performance (Widiastuti et al., 2024).

Implementing effective communication management requires the integration of the various aspects discussed earlier. Open, clear, and regular communication between principals and teachers can facilitate problem-solving, professional development, and improved teaching quality (Lestari, 2019). Principals who are successful in communication management will be able to build better relationships between management and teaching staff (Haryato et al., 2024). This will motivate teachers to work better, increase work morale, and improve teachers' performance in carrying out daily tasks at school.

Teacher performance refers to the abilities and results achieved in carrying out teaching tasks, which include planning, implementing learning, and evaluating student achievement (Wardany & Rigianti, 2023). This performance also involves aspects of professionalism, motivation, and sustainable competency development, where the measurement of teacher performance is not only seen from the ability to teach in the classroom, but also from the extent to which teachers are able to adapt to curriculum developments, technology, and student needs (Nurchaeni et al., 2023). The development of optimal teacher performance is greatly influenced by effective communication management between principals and teachers. Open and transparent communication allows for constructive feedback that helps teachers improve teaching methods, address problems that arise in the classroom, and adapt to changes that occur in education (Dhesiyanti & Wibowo, 2025). In addition, effective communication also allows principals to provide the necessary support to encourage teacher motivation and enrich their knowledge regarding current educational practices, which in turn will improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes (Abdul Majid, 2024).

The results of the study show that the implementation of communication management of school principals at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe can be seen from several characteristics in the communication style applied. Principals have the ability to manage effective communication with teachers, in an open and structured manner. One example is in the process of delivering information and instructions through regular meetings and organized communication groups. The teachers revealed that the communication between the principal and teachers at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe City was quite clear and detailed. As revealed by one of the teachers at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe that We

are always given a clear explanation of school policies, and the instructions given are always monitored for implementation. We feel more directed and know what to do.

The principal is also active in supervising teacher performance, both directly and through the supervision team formed. In this case, the principal goes directly to monitor the supervisors who are in charge of supervising the teachers, as explained by the principal, that I monitored the supervisors who then assessed the teacher's performance. If a problem is found, I immediately intervene to provide guidance.

This shows that the principal not only plays a role in managing communication, but is also directly involved in supervision related to teacher performance. However, even though the communication has been quite effective, there are still challenges in terms of teachers' openness to convey their aspirations or problems in large forums. As one teacher put it, "Sometimes we don't feel comfortable enough to speak openly in front of a lot of people. So, we prefer to convey the problem through a close friend or the head of the department". Nonetheless, the principal tries to create a more open and comfortable space, by providing more personalized communication channels such as direct conversations or through digital media. The principal responded by saying, "I am always open to listening to complaints or suggestions from teachers, whether it is through meetings or direct conversations outside of the forum."

The results of this interview show that the communication between the principal and teachers at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe is very supportive of teacher performance, although there are several areas that still need to be improved, such as the openness of teachers in expressing their opinions directly in forums. With more open and transparent communication management, it is hoped that it can further improve the quality of teaching and teacher performance in the school.

Principal's Communication Strategy in Improving Teacher Performance

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, feelings, or messages between two or more parties using various channels, both verbal (verbal) and non-verbal (writing, body language, facial expressions, etc.) (Parianto & Marisa, 2022). In communication, there are the sender of the message who conveys the information, the communication channel used to convey the message, the recipient of the message who receives and interprets the message, and the feedback or response provided by the recipient of the message to ensure that the message has been understood correctly. Communication can occur in a variety of contexts, such as interpersonal communication (between individuals), group communication, organizational communication, and mass communication. Successful communication relies heavily on factors such as message clarity, choice of the right channel, understanding between sender and receiver, and the ability to listen and respond constructively (Moh. Yamin Rumra, 2023).

The principal's communication strategy is a systematic and structured approach in managing the flow of information between the principal and the teacher, with the aim of improving teacher performance in the learning process. The definition of this communication strategy includes the various ways that the principal uses to convey

information, provide feedback, and motivate teachers in achieving learning goals (Romandoni et al., 2024). The principal, as an educational leader, has an important role in managing effective communication so that every instruction, policy, and program set can be understood and implemented properly by teachers (Sholeh, 2017). Through clear and directed communication, it is hoped that teachers' performance can improve, in line with the school's goals to be achieved (Bachtiar et al., 2024).

There are several important elements in a communication such as verbal and non-verbal communication, communication channels, and communication frequency. Verbal communication is a form of communication that uses words to convey a message or information (Polack, 2020). This form can be done through two main channels, namely oral communication and written communication. Verbal communication involves the use of spoken words, either in direct conversation or through voice media, such as the telephone. Meanwhile, written communication uses written words, such as letters, emails, or text messages. Verbal communication has an important role in facilitating clear interactions, expressing ideas or information, and building relationships between individuals or groups. It is intended that verbal communication refers to direct conversations between principals and teachers, both in meetings and individual conversations (Nurasiah & Zulkhairi, 2021). Communication channels, such as WhatsApp groups or other digital communication platforms, also play a role in accelerating the delivery of information.

Communication frequency is a determining factor for the success of a communication strategy, where too infrequent communication can lead to miscommunication (Arizona et al., 2024). Communication that is too frequent can interfere with the teacher's focus. Therefore, a balance in this category is essential to ensure effective communication and does not burden teachers in carrying out their duties (Purwati et al., 2025). The manifestation of this communication strategy can be seen in various concrete actions taken by school principals. One of them is the provision of clear and systematic instructions in regular meetings held every month. In the meeting, the principal ensured that every policy and program that would be implemented was conveyed in detail and understood by the teachers. In addition, the principal also provides direct feedback to teachers, either through private meetings or through digital communication channels, such as WhatsApp groups. The principal also conducts supervision in a structured manner, both routine and random, to ensure that the teacher's performance is in accordance with the set standards (Rusmalawati et al., 2024).

Principals must pay attention to the importance of creating an open space for teachers to express their opinions, ideas, and problems that teachers face (Setiyadi & Rosalina, 2021). In practice, principals encourage teachers to speak openly in meetings or through private conversations outside of forums. This aims to make teachers feel more appreciated and have the opportunity to express the obstacles that teachers encounter in teaching (Runi La Ande et al., 2025). With open and supportive communication, the principal seeks to create a conducive work environment, which in turn can improve teacher motivation and performance (Safran, 2025). Through a well-planned

communication strategy, the principal can encourage teachers to continue to develop and give their best in the learning process.

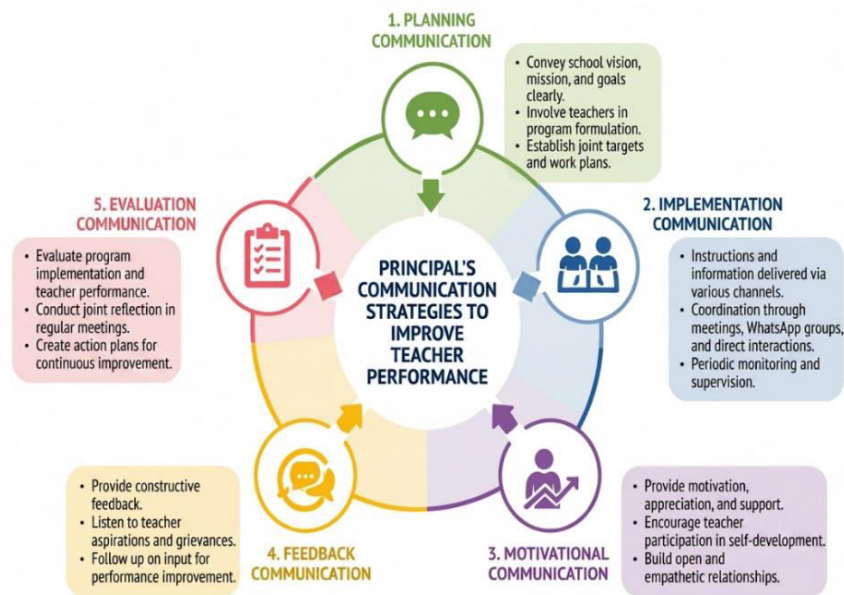


Figure 2. Principal's Communication Strategy in Improving Teacher Performance

The figure above shows that the effectiveness of the principal's communication strategy in improving teacher performance does not depend only on one aspect of communication, but on the integration of five forms of communication that is carried out systematically and continuously. Previous research has focused more on just one or two aspects, such as planning or implementation of communication, but this study shows that success in improving teacher performance involves a communication cycle consisting of clear planning, implementation of instruction through various communication channels, motivation and support for teacher self-development, providing constructive feedback, and evaluation of continuous program implementation. A novelty contribution from these findings is an integrative cycle-based communication strategy model that provides a new reference for principals in managing organizational communication effectively, with a focus on improving teacher performance holistically. This approach shows that each step of communication is mutually supportive and reinforceful, resulting in a significant impact on the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of Principal's Communication Management in Improving Teacher Performance

The implementation of communication management of school principals is key in creating an environment conducive to improving teacher performance (Demirkasımoğlu & Diş, 2026). Effective communication between principals and teachers greatly affects the quality of teaching and the success of achieving educational goals in schools (Amani, 2023). Through structured communication, the principal can convey the vision, mission, and policies that teachers need to understand, while teachers also have the opportunity to provide constructive feedback. This process not only serves as a channel of information, but also as a tool to motivate, support, and develop the professionalism of teachers.

However, as in any managerial process, there are factors that can support or hinder the implementation of this communication in improving teacher performance.



Figure 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Principal Communication Management Implementation on Teacher Performance Improvement

Some of the supporting factors in the implementation of communication management by school principals include information disclosure, selection of the right communication channels, and the support and motivation provided by the principal. Information disclosure is essential so that teachers clearly understand the policies, instructions, and goals they want to achieve. With clear and transparent information, teachers can carry out their duties more purposefully and according to expectations (Herman, 2020). Effective communication channel selection, such as the use of WhatsApp groups, regular meetings, and live conversations, allows information to be delivered more quickly and efficiently. In addition, school principals who provide support in the form of appreciation for teachers' achievements or motivation for self-development help create a more positive work atmosphere and increase teachers' work morale, which ultimately contributes to improving teacher performance (Nurhayati & Suwandi, 2024).

There are also inhibiting factors in the implementation of communication management that can affect its effectiveness in improving teacher performance. One of them is the psychological barriers that teachers have, such as discomfort or fear of public speaking, that prevent them from expressing issues or opinions in large forums. Ambiguity in message delivery is also a significant obstacle. When the message or instruction from the principal is not conveyed clearly or well understood, this can lead to confusion among teachers, affecting the performance of their duties. In addition, differences in perception between principals and teachers related to the goals or

instructions given can also worsen communication and reduce their effectiveness in improving teacher performance.

These inhibiting factors can create gaps in communication between principals and teachers that ultimately affect their performance. For example, unclear messages or psychological barriers in teachers can lead to miscommunication, leading to misunderstanding and confusion in implementing established policies (Mutholib et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important for school principals to create more open communication channels, as well as clearly provide every message conveyed, so that teachers feel comfortable expressing their opinions or problems. By overcoming these barriers, principals can improve communication management and create a more effective work environment, which will lead to improved teacher performance and the quality of education in schools.

Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of communication management of school principals plays a significant role in improving teacher performance at SMK Negeri 2 Lhokseumawe. Clear, structured, and systematic communication allows teachers to understand instruction, policies, and educational objectives as a whole, so that the implementation of duties and responsibilities becomes more targeted. The communication strategies implemented include the use of various channels, such as regular meetings, personal communication, and digital media, as well as the provision of constructive feedback and scheduled supervision, which directly encourages professionalism, motivation, and active involvement of teachers in the learning process. In addition, the principal emphasized the openness and participation of teachers, both in open forums and individual communication, so as to create a conducive work climate that supports collaboration and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

The results of the study also highlight the existence of supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the communication. Supporting factors include information disclosure, effective communication channels, and motivational support from the principal, while inhibiting factors include teachers' psychological barriers, unclear messages, and differences in perception that can cause miscommunication. By overcoming these barriers through an adaptive, systematic, and participatory communication approach, school principals can create an effective educational environment, improve the quality of teaching, and encourage teacher performance in a sustainable manner, so that school goals and teacher competency development can be optimally achieved.

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