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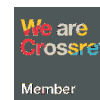
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Building educational relationships: an analysis of teacher interpersonal communication levels in two senior high schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to map the level of teachers' interpersonal communication in senior high schools as a basis for strengthening educational relationships. Using a quantitative descriptive approach, the study involved all 113 teachers from two senior high schools in Pariaman City; 49.5% from senior high school number 1 and 50.5% from senior high school number 3 through a total sampling technique. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 25 items representing five indicators: openness and feedback, collaboration and teamwork, use of technology in communication, conflict management, and leadership supporting adaptive communication. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to determine mean scores and achievement levels. The results indicate that teachers' interpersonal communication is generally at a high level (mean = 3.81; 76.28%). Collaboration and teamwork emerged as the strongest dimension, followed by openness and feedback and leadership support, while communication technology use and conflict management showed relatively lower scores. This study contributes by providing an empirical mapping of teachers' interpersonal communication as a foundation for strengthening professional relationships in secondary education. The findings imply the need for targeted professional development programs, particularly in conflict resolution and digital communication practices. However, this study is limited to two public senior high schools and relies on self-reported data, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to involve broader samples and mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into interpersonal communication dynamics in schools.

Keywords:

Communication openness,
Educational relationship,
Interpersonal communication,
Senior high school teachers,
Teacher collaboration

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Introduction

Communication is a vital element in education, serving as a bridge that influences classroom dynamics, student engagement, and relationships within educational institutions. As the heartbeat of schools, it supports the continuous exchange of information, meaning, and emotions that underpin effective teaching and organizational well-being. Research consistently demonstrates that positive teacher interpersonal behaviors such as immediacy, rapport, and confirmation greatly contribute to increasing students' motivation, participation, and academic success (Iman et al.,

2024; W. Liu, 2021). Meta-analytic evidence further confirms that high-quality teacher–student relationships are closely associated with improved academic performance, school adjustment, and behavioral outcomes (Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; Kincade et al., 2020). At the organizational level, a supportive communication climate promotes trust, efficiency, and effective coordination, whereas defensive communication weakens institutional (Forward et al., 2011; Rusdi & Rahmawati, 2025). In classroom settings, clear and empathetic communication enables teachers to manage disruptions while preserving student autonomy (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023). The integration of digital communication further strengthens feedback processes and pedagogical closeness when effectively managed (Cui, 2022; Kuswoyo et al., 2022; Shan et al., 2014). Moreover, proactive communication among teachers, students, and families has been shown to improve attendance and learning engagement (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). Collectively, these findings affirm that communication is not merely a supportive element but a core mechanism that sustains professional coordination, nurtures educational relationships, and maintains the vitality of school organizations (Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; W. Liu, 2021).

Recent studies show that teachers' interpersonal communication is still not optimal in many schools, especially in maintaining openness, empathy, and constructive feedback during daily interactions. Although its importance is widely recognized, many teachers experience difficulties in applying effective communication practices, such as conveying messages clearly, responding to students' emotions, and maintaining mutual understanding in diverse classrooms (Sukardi et al., 2025). These challenges are often caused by limited communication training, heavy administrative workloads, generational differences, and rigid organizational structures. Research also indicates that positive interpersonal behaviors such as rapport, clarity, and confirmation play an important role in increasing students' motivation and learning engagement (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). However, these behaviors tend to decline under conditions of time pressure, emotional exhaustion, and the increasing use of digital communication. International findings support this issue, showing that although teacher–student interpersonal relationships positively affect academic achievement, inconsistent communication can weaken this effect (Zhang, 2022). Similarly, Anggoro & Ningsih (2023) found that interpersonal communication may support students' learning interest only when teachers are able to manage feedback effectively and avoid defensive communication climates. Overall, these findings indicate that teachers' interpersonal communication has not yet reached an optimal level, highlighting the need for continuous professional development and supportive school leadership to strengthen effective and empathetic communication in educational settings.

Interpersonal communication refers to direct or mediated personal exchanges that involve the sharing of meaning, emotions, and relationships (Manusov et al., 2020). It emphasizes openness, empathy, support, positive regard, and equality between communicators (DeVito & DeVito, 2019). In educational organizations, interpersonal communication plays a vital managerial and relational role, as effective communication supports smooth coordination and goal achievement, while poor communication often leads to misunderstanding, conflict, and decreased organizational cohesion. Constructive interpersonal communication has been shown to minimize conflict and strengthen cooperation among organizational members (üstüner & Kış, 2014). Moreover, interpersonal communication contributes to building relationships, resolving conflict, reducing uncertainty, sharing knowledge, motivating individuals, and expressing emotions effectively (Sanmas et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2019). Empirical studies further demonstrate that interpersonal communication positively influences employee performance (Luky et al., 2021; Wijayanti, 2021), improves job satisfaction (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012; Madhur & Ramshanker, 2020; Sembiring & Purba, 2019), and correlates strongly with organizational (Bedeian et al., 1981; Hayati, 2025).

In educational contexts, interpersonal communication is essential not only for delivering instructional content but also for shaping a positive relational climate that supports trust, motivation, and student engagement. A large-scale study found that teachers' interpersonal behaviors, particularly proximity and influence, significantly affect students' attitudes toward learning (Pj et al., 2005). Similarly, Iman et al., (2024) reported that meaningful teacher–student communication fosters positive behavioral change by making students feel respected and valued.

Research also indicates that communication barriers can be reduced through targeted training and the development of interpersonal skills, leading to more effective learning experiences (Sukardi et al., 2025). Teachers who communicate clearly and listen actively tend to enhance student participation and engagement (Astutik & Sidabutar, 2024). In Indonesia, Wardani (2017). found a positive relationship between teachers' interpersonal communication skills and students' academic achievement, while Opit & Warouw (2021) demonstrated that effective interpersonal communication strengthens school leadership and staff performance. Overall, these findings confirm that interpersonal communication is not merely a supplementary skill but a fundamental component of effective educational practice, serving as the foundation for productive relationships, meaningful learning, and students' cognitive and emotional development.

Over the past decade, empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that the quality of teachers' interpersonal relationships and communication is closely associated with students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement across educational contexts. Positive teacher–student relationships function as protective factors that support students' academic adjustment and behavioral regulation (Longobardi et al., 2016a). while interpersonal behaviors such as immediacy, rapport, and confirmation have been shown to enhance learning motivation and engagement through teachers' credibility and interactive style (Li, 2021; W. Liu, 2021; Kokkinos et al., 2015; Rocchi & Lennox-Terrion, 2023). In addition, interpersonal communication contributes to the development of students' social skills and relational competence (A. Suryana et al., 2020) dan M. A. Suryana & Agus Permana, n.d.) as well as fostering closeness and emotional connection through verbal and nonverbal interaction. Both theoretically and empirically, interpersonal communication is widely recognized as a core element in building effective educational relationships and as a key indicator of successful professional interaction in schools (Pourgharib & Shakki, 2024). In the Indonesian context, research highlights the importance of message clarity, empathy, and adaptability in sustaining high-quality teacher–student interactions (Pratama & Mukhlis, 2024a), while studies in boarding schools emphasize its role in reducing conflict and maintaining institutional harmony (Ismail, 2017). Despite this strong evidence base, important research gaps remain, as most existing studies focus on higher education or EFL contexts, rely on multivariable designs, and rarely provide direct assessments of teachers' interpersonal communication levels, particularly in Indonesian senior high schools. Moreover, post-pandemic investigations remain limited, and locally validated instruments are still scarce. Addressing these gaps is crucial, as understanding teachers' interpersonal communication levels has strategic value for improving professional development and educational quality. Effective interpersonal communication fosters trust, empathy, and supportive classroom climates (DeVito & DeVito, 2019; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021), while also serving as an indicator of school social dynamics, feedback quality, and conflict management capacity (Heifetz et al., 2009). Mapping these communication levels enables schools to design targeted interventions such as communication training, mentoring, and collaborative coaching, thereby promoting psychological safety, collegial trust, and organizational adaptability in contemporary educational environments (Cui, 2022; Karasova & Nehyba, 2023).

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the importance of teachers' interpersonal communication in enhancing student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; Iman et al., 2024; W. Liu, 2021). Effective interpersonal communication such as openness, empathy, feedback, and rapport has been shown to contribute to positive classroom climates and strong educational relationships (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). At the organizational level, communication also plays a key role in fostering collaboration, trust, and institutional effectiveness (Forward et al., 2011; Rusdi & Rahmawati, 2025). However, empirical evidence indicates that teachers' interpersonal communication has not yet been optimally implemented in many school contexts. Teachers often experience difficulties in maintaining openness, managing feedback, and sustaining effective interactions due to workload pressures, limited communication training, and organizational constraints (Sukardi et al., 2025; Zhang, 2022). Although numerous studies have examined interpersonal communication, most focus on higher education or EFL contexts and employ correlational or multivariable designs (Kokkinos et al., 2015;

Li, 2021) Research that specifically maps the level of teachers' interpersonal communication in senior high schools particularly in the Indonesian context remains limited. In addition, post-pandemic changes in instructional practices and increased reliance on digital communication have altered teacher-student interactions, yet empirical investigations addressing these changes are still scarce (Cui, 2022; Kuswoyo et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies using comprehensive indicators of interpersonal communication such as openness, collaboration, conflict management, and adaptive leadership are rarely conducted at the school level. These gaps indicate the need for a descriptive study that systematically examines teachers' interpersonal communication as a foundation for improving educational relationships and professional development in senior high schools.

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of teachers' interpersonal communication in senior high schools and to provide a clear description of how such communication is practiced in everyday educational interactions. Specifically, this study aims to identify the extent to which teachers demonstrate key interpersonal communication qualities such as openness, empathy, clarity, responsiveness, and supportive behavior in their interactions with students and colleagues. By mapping these communication patterns, the study seeks to reveal existing strengths as well as areas that require improvement. In addition, this research intends to contribute empirical evidence that can support schools in designing more effective professional development programs related to communication skills. Ultimately, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for school leaders and educators in fostering healthier communication climates, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and improving the overall quality of teaching and learning in senior high school settings.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at providing a factual representation of the level of teachers' interpersonal communication in senior high schools. The descriptive-quantitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to capture social phenomena as they naturally occur objectively, measurably, and explainable through numerical patterns and data distributions. Through this method, the study seeks to present a comprehensive portrait of teachers' interpersonal communication profiles within the professional context of the school environment, offering empirical insights that can inform both theoretical understanding and practical improvement in educational communication practices.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all teaching staff from two public senior high schools in Pariaman City, namely Senior High School 1 Pariaman and Senior High School 3 Pariaman. The sampling technique employed was total sampling, considering that the total population size was relatively small and all members could be effectively reached. A total of 113 teachers participated as respondents, comprising 49.5% from Senior High School Number 1 Pariaman and 50.5% from Senior High School Number 3 Pariaman. In terms of gender distribution, female teachers dominated the sample (76.9%), while male teachers accounted for 23.1%, reflecting the strong presence of women in the teaching profession within secondary education in the region. Viewed from the perspective of age, the majority of respondents were within the 36–45 age group (32.7%), followed by those aged 46–55 (27.4%), 26–35 (24.8%), and 56–65 (15.1%). Regarding years of service, most teachers had 11–20 years of experience (46%), followed by those with 1–10 years (33.7%), 21–30 years (12.3%), and 31–40 years (8%) of teaching experience. These figures indicate that the majority of teachers were in their productive and professionally mature phase, suggesting that their perspectives are representative and reliable for assessing interpersonal communication practices within the school setting.

Instrument and Data Collection Techniques

The research instrument consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale with the following response options: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2),

and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was developed based on the dimensions of interpersonal communication adapted from DeVito's (2019) framework and reinforced by recent studies in the field of educational communication (Heifetz et al., 2009; Li, 2021; W. Liu, 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). The instrument encompassed five key dimensions: (1) Openness and Feedback, (2) Collaboration and Teamwork, (3) Use of Technology for Communication, (4) Conflict Management and Communication Challenges, and (5) Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication.

Data were collected directly through field research by the researcher visiting both participating schools. The questionnaires were distributed face-to-face to teachers, accompanied by a concise explanation of the research objectives, procedures, and assurances of data confidentiality. This direct approach was intended to ensure a high response rate and accuracy of responses. All completed questionnaires were retrieved on the same day to minimize response bias and prevent data loss.

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted involving 20 respondents with similar characteristics to the study sample to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument. The validity test confirmed that all items were valid (See Table 1), while the reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.70, indicating a strong level of internal consistency across all questionnaire items (See Table 2).

Table 1. Validity Test of Instrument

Item	Pearson Correlation	rho Table (N=20)	Criteria
Item-01	.603**	0.444	Valid
Item-02	.625**	0.444	Valid
Item-03	.682**	0.444	Valid
Item-04	.538*	0.444	Valid
Item-05	.650**	0.444	Valid
Item-06	.901**	0.444	Valid
Item-07	.808**	0.444	Valid
Item-08	.596**	0.444	Valid
Item-09	.795**	0.444	Valid
Item-10	.594**	0.444	Valid
Item-11	.665**	0.444	Valid
Item-12	.667**	0.444	Valid
Item-13	.636**	0.444	Valid
Item-14	.625**	0.444	Valid
Item-15	.467*	0.444	Valid
Item-16	.774**	0.444	Valid
Item-17	.735**	0.444	Valid
Item-18	.915**	0.444	Valid
Item-19	.610**	0.444	Valid
Item-20	.617**	0.444	Valid
Item-21	.821**	0.444	Valid
Item-22	.572**	0.444	Valid
Item-23	.723**	0.444	Valid
Item-24	.646**	0.444	Valid
Item-25	.659**	0.444	Valid

Table 2. Reliability Test of Instrument

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient	Criteria
0.951	25	0,70	Reliable

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with the aid of SPSS version 25.0. The analysis was carried out in several stages: (1) examining data completeness and conducting validity and reliability tests of the instrument; (2) calculating the mean scores, percentages, and standard deviations for each dimension of interpersonal communication; and (3) categorizing the results into five interpretive intervals: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. Subsequently, the data were presented in tables and graphical formats to facilitate visual interpretation. The results were then described narratively to explain the general patterns and dynamics of teachers' interpersonal communication across the two participating schools. Through this analytical approach, the study aimed to provide empirical contributions to the understanding of teachers' social competence and to strengthen a culture of educational communication within secondary education settings. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for evidence-based strategies to enhance teacher-student interactions and promote a more collaborative and communicative school environment.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Before analyzing the level of teachers' interpersonal communication, it is essential to first present a descriptive overview of the respondents' characteristics. This description provides a general understanding of the teaching staff who participated in the study, allowing for a more comprehensive interpretation of the research findings. The study involved 113 teachers drawn from two public senior high schools in Pariaman City, namely Senior High School 1 Pariaman and Senior High School 3 Pariaman. Respondents were selected using a total sampling technique, based on the consideration that the entire teacher population from both schools could be directly accessed by the researcher. The demographic profile of the respondents was classified according to school affiliation, gender, age group, and years of service. The results of the tabulation revealed a sufficiently diverse demographic distribution, reflecting a broad range of professional experiences among teachers in secondary education. Such diversity enhances the representativeness of the data and supports the reliability of the findings. A detailed description of the respondents' characteristics is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

Aspect	Category	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage (%)
School Affiliation	Senior High School 1 Pariaman	56	49.5
	Senior High School 3 Pariaman	57	50.5
Total Respondents	Total	113	100.0
Gender	Male	26	23.1
	Female	87	76.9
Age (Years)	26–35	28	24.8
	36–45	37	32.7
	46–55	31	27.4
	56–65	17	15.1
Years of Service	1–10	38	33.7
	11–20	52	46.0
	21–30	14	12.3
	31–40	9	8.0
Total Respondents		113	100.0

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate a balanced and representative composition. The predominance of female teachers

highlights the continuing central role of women in secondary education in Pariaman City, particularly in driving learning processes and fostering students' character development. The age distribution, concentrated within the productive range of 36–45 years, suggests that most respondents possess substantial teaching experience while maintaining high levels of energy, creativity, and motivation for classroom innovation. Furthermore, the proportion of teachers with 11–20 years of teaching experience reflects a cohort of educators who have achieved professional maturity, emotional stability, and strong adaptability to the dynamic nature of interpersonal communication within the school environment. These characteristics provide a robust foundation for interpreting the findings on interpersonal communication, as the data are derived from experienced and actively engaged teachers who participate in both academic and social dimensions of school life. Thus, the diverse respondent profile in terms of age, gender, and years of service serves as a key strength of this study, reinforcing the reliability of the data in assessing the level of teachers' interpersonal communication in senior high schools.

Research Findings

The findings of this study are derived from data collected through questionnaires distributed to 113 teacher respondents, comprising 25 statements measured using a five-point Likert scale (1–5). Accordingly, the theoretical minimum score per respondent was 25 (if all statements were answered "Strongly Disagree"), while the maximum theoretical score was 125 (if all items were answered "Strongly Agree"). The total scores were then aggregated and converted into mean values and achievement percentages to facilitate interpretation across the five indicators of interpersonal communication. The results presented in the following tables and figures illustrate the average performance levels and trends for each indicator, along with the overall mean score. These data serve as the basis for a comparative discussion aimed at identifying both the strengths and the areas that require further enhancement in teachers' interpersonal communication practices at senior high schools. This analytical framework provides not only a descriptive snapshot but also a contextual understanding of how interpersonal communication dynamics operate within the professional environment of secondary education.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of teachers' interpersonal communication scores obtained from 113 valid responses. The data show that all questionnaires were completed, with no missing values. The mean score of 95.35 indicates a generally high level of interpersonal communication among teachers, while the median (99.00) and mode (100) suggest that most respondents scored close to the upper range of the scale. The standard deviation of 16.001 and variance of 256.034 reflect moderate variability in the distribution of responses, implying some differences in communication performance among teachers. The range of 90, with scores spanning from 35 (minimum) to 125 (maximum), further demonstrates that while overall communication levels are high, there are still variations across individuals. This statistical profile provides an overview of the general tendencies and dispersion of teachers' interpersonal communication levels in the two senior high schools studied.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication Levels

Statistics		
Interpersonal Communication		
N	Valid	113
	Missing	0
Mean		95.35
Median		99.00
Mode		100
Std. Deviation		16.001
Variance		256.034
Range		90
Minimum		35
Maximum		125

The statistical results presented in Table 4 provide a comprehensive overview of teachers' interpersonal communication performance in the two senior high schools studied. Overall, these results imply that the communication climate within both schools can be considered positive and well-developed, yet there remains variation in individual competence levels. Such variation may stem from differences in teaching experience, personality traits, or adaptability to digital communication modes. Therefore, these findings underline the importance of targeted professional development programs, particularly those that focus on enhancing teachers' interpersonal communication strategies to achieve greater consistency and inclusivity in educational interactions.

Table 5 presents a summary of the descriptive analysis of teachers' interpersonal communication levels, measured across five key indicators: openness and feedback, collaboration and teamwork, use of technology for communication, conflict management and communication challenges, and leadership supporting adaptive communication. The table includes the total scores, mean values, percentage achievements, and interpretive categories for each indicator, along with the overall average.

Overall, all indicators fall within the high category, indicating that the communication ecosystem in both senior high schools operates effectively and consistently across dimensions. This pattern suggests that teachers maintain constructive interpersonal interactions marked by collaboration, openness, and mutual respect reflecting a communicative culture that supports educational quality and professional engagement within the school environment.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication Levels based On Its Indicators

Indicator	Total Score	Mean	Achievement Percentage (%)	Category
Openness and Feedback	432.2	3.82	76.50	High
Collaboration and Teamwork	435.8	3.86	77.13	High
Use of Technology for Communication	428.6	3.79	75.86	High
Conflict Management and Communication Challenges	427.6	3.78	75.68	High
Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication	430.8	3.81	76.25	High
Overall Average	431.0	3.81	76.28	High

Overall, the level of teachers' interpersonal communication falls within the high category, with an overall mean score of 3.81 or 76.28%. The indicator-level results reveal a relatively uniform pattern, with only about a 1.45-point difference between achievement percentages, indicating consistent communication practices across both schools. The highest-performing dimension, Collaboration and Teamwork (77.13%, mean = 3.86), reflects a strong collegial culture and mature coordination among teachers in both instructional and non-instructional tasks. This is followed by Openness and Feedback (76.50%, mean = 3.82) and Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication (76.25%, mean = 3.81), suggesting that feedback channels function effectively and that school leadership fosters a flexible and supportive communication climate.

Meanwhile, the Use of Technology for Communication (75.86%, mean = 3.79) also ranks high, indicating widespread use of digital media for both academic and administrative coordination—though there remains room for improvement in the depth of interaction, such as implementing data-driven feedback or integrating learning management systems more systematically. The Conflict Management and Communication Challenges indicator scored slightly lower (75.68%, mean = 3.78) yet still within the high category, signaling the need for further development of teachers' assertive, negotiation, and mediation skills to transform disagreements into constructive socio-emotional learning experiences.

Taken together, these findings portray a healthy communication ecosystem, characterized by strong teamwork and openness, while emphasizing the importance of enhancing conflict

management capabilities and deepening technology-mediated communication practices. Strengthening these areas is expected to further improve the quality of educational relationships and positively influence the overall effectiveness of the learning process.

The following figure illustrates the percentage achievement of each indicator of teachers' interpersonal communication across the two senior high schools included in this study. The graph demonstrates that all indicators fall within the 75–77% range, which is categorized as high. The highest achievement was recorded for Collaboration and Teamwork (77.13%), followed by Openness and Feedback (76.50%) and Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication (76.25%). Meanwhile, Use of Technology for Communication (75.86%) and Conflict Management and Communication Challenges (75.68%) scored slightly lower but still remained within the high category. Overall, this pattern indicates a relatively consistent and healthy communication ecosystem across all dimensions. The results suggest that teachers in both schools have established effective interpersonal communication marked by collaboration, openness, and supportive leadership. Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement, particularly in strengthening conflict management skills and deepening the integration of technology-based communication practices to further enhance relational quality and pedagogical effectiveness within the school environment.

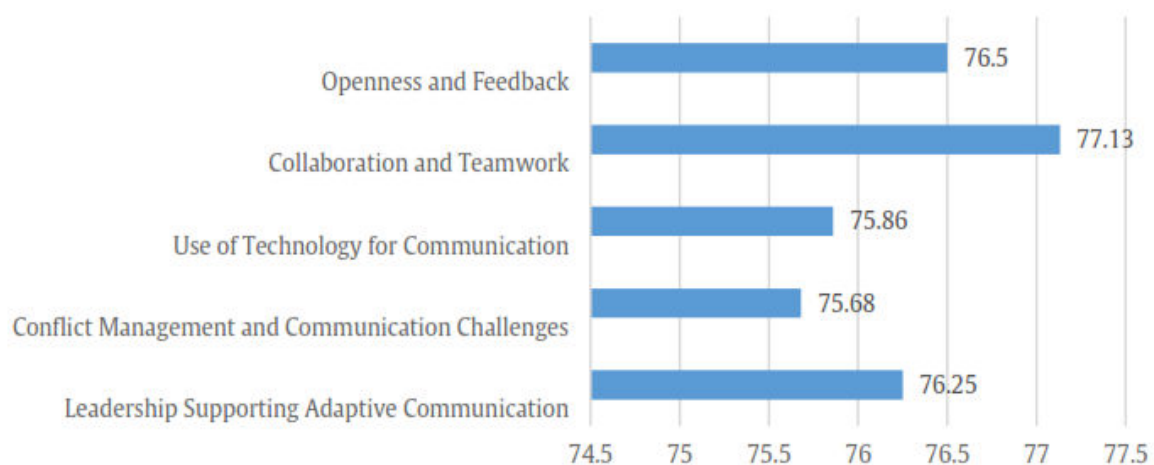


Figure 1. Percentage Achievement of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication Indicators

Discussion

Communication lies at the core of human interaction, serving not only as a medium for exchanging information but also as a mechanism through which individuals construct meaning, develop self-awareness, and build social and spiritual connections (Achyar & Mandasari, 2019). In educational settings, this function becomes particularly salient, as communication shapes both instructional processes and relational dynamics. The findings of this study indicate that teachers' interpersonal communication is generally well developed, with all five measured indicators falling within the high category (overall mean = 3.81; achievement rate = 76.28%). This suggests that communication practices in the observed schools function effectively as a foundation for collaborative teaching and learning.

Among the indicators, Collaboration and Teamwork achieved the highest score (77.13%), reflecting a strong culture of collegial interaction and shared responsibility. This result aligns with 21st-century education frameworks, which emphasize collaboration and communication as core professional competencies necessary for effective teaching and collective problem-solving (Longobardi et al., 2016b; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). The prominence of this indicator also supports social constructivist perspectives, which view learning as a socially mediated process shaped through dialogue and cooperation. In this sense, teachers' ability to work collaboratively not only enhances institutional functioning but also models collaborative behavior for students.

The high score obtained for Openness and Feedback (76.50%) further reinforces DeVito & DeVito (2019) assertion that effective interpersonal communication is grounded in openness, emotional support, and equality. These elements create a psychologically safe environment in which both teachers and students feel valued and respected. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that teachers who demonstrate immediacy, rapport, and confirmation tend to foster higher levels of student motivation and engagement (P. Liu, 2015, 2016; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Such communication behaviors help strengthen relational trust and promote active participation, which are essential for meaningful learning experiences.

The dimension of Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication (76.25%) highlights the important role of school leaders and senior teachers in shaping communication norms. This result aligns closely with the Adaptive Leadership framework proposed by Heifetz et al., (2009) which emphasizes responsiveness, shared responsibility, and open dialogue in navigating organizational challenges. Similarly, Gibb's concept of a supportive communication climate underscores the importance of non-defensive communication, mutual respect, and empowerment in sustaining healthy organizational relationships (Forward et al., 2011). The findings suggest that leadership practices within the schools have contributed positively to creating an environment where communication flows openly and adaptively, supporting both instructional and organizational goals.

The indicator related to the Use of Technology for Communication (75.86%) also falls within the high category, reflecting teachers' growing engagement with digital communication tools. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the role of ICT literacy in enhancing teacher-student interaction when technology is used purposefully and pedagogically (Jensen, 2002; Jensen & Helles, 2017; W. Liu, 2021a). However, the relatively lower score compared to other indicators suggests that digital communication is still used primarily as a functional tool rather than as a medium for deeper pedagogical engagement. This indicates a need to move beyond basic information delivery toward more reflective and data-informed digital communication practices, such as personalized feedback and interactive learning platforms.

The lowest relative score was found in the Conflict Management and Communication Challenges indicator (75.68%), although it still remained within the high category. This finding suggests that while teachers generally demonstrate effective interpersonal communication, competencies related to assertiveness, negotiation, and conflict resolution require further development. This pattern is consistent with previous studies indicating that interpersonal communication plays a critical role in managing classroom and organizational conflict, yet remains one of the more challenging skills to master (Ismail, 2017). In the Indonesian context, research has also shown that teachers' interpersonal behaviors significantly influence student motivation and autonomy, but relational tensions may still arise when communication is not managed constructively (Pratama & Mukhlis, 2024a). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening conflict management skills as part of professional development programs.

The relatively narrow range of achievement scores (75–77%) across all indicators reflects a stable and consistent communication culture within the schools studied. This consistency suggests the presence of shared norms and expectations regarding communication practices among teachers. However, it also reveals areas for further enhancement, particularly in strengthening technology-mediated communication and improving conflict management strategies. Addressing these areas would allow schools to move beyond functional communication toward more transformative and reflective practices that support long-term professional growth. Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the view that interpersonal communication functions as a strategic lever in educational settings. Effective communication not only supports instructional delivery but also shapes organizational climate, professional relationships, and students' socio-emotional development. These results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the central role of communication in fostering positive learning environments and academic success (DeVito, 2019; Xie, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Longobardi et al., 2016).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a descriptive design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between interpersonal communication and educational outcomes. Second, the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias and may not fully capture actual communication practices. Third, the study was conducted in a limited number of senior high schools, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts or levels. Finally, although this study provides a comprehensive overview of interpersonal communication levels, it does not explore in depth how these communication practices influence specific student outcomes. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, involve broader samples, and examine the direct impact of teachers' interpersonal communication on student achievement, engagement, and well-being.

Conclusion

This study concludes that teachers' interpersonal communication in the two public senior high schools in Pariaman City is generally at a high level (mean = 3.81; achievement rate = 76.28%). Among the five measured indicators, Collaboration and Teamwork emerged as the strongest dimension (77.13%), followed by Openness and Feedback (76.50%) and Leadership Supporting Adaptive Communication (76.25%). The indicators of Use of Technology for Communication (75.86%) and Conflict Management (75.68%) also fell within the high category, although they showed relatively lower scores compared to the other dimensions. These findings indicate that the schools have established a healthy communication climate characterized by cooperation, openness, and supportive leadership, while still facing challenges in optimizing digital communication practices and managing interpersonal conflict. Beyond describing communication levels, the findings provide important implications for educational practice. The strong performance in collaboration and openness reflects a positive relational culture that can support further professional development, while the relatively lower scores in technology-based communication and conflict management indicate the need for targeted improvement. Schools are therefore encouraged to strengthen teachers' digital communication skills, particularly in using technology for formative feedback and interactive learning, as well as to enhance competencies in assertive communication and conflict resolution. From a managerial perspective, these results offer empirical guidance for school leaders and policymakers in designing focused professional development programs and establishing communication standards, with the study's indicators serving as practical benchmarks for evaluating teacher performance. At the same time, this study contributes to the literature by providing a context-specific quantitative overview of teachers' interpersonal communication in Indonesian senior high schools, an area that remains underexplored. Nevertheless, the reliance on self-reported data, the descriptive research design, and the absence of qualitative insights limit the depth of interpretation, indicating the need for future studies employing mixed-method or qualitative approaches to better capture how interpersonal communication is experienced and enacted in everyday school contexts. Therefore, future research is strongly recommended to adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches, such as interviews, classroom observations, or case studies, to explore the meanings, challenges, and contextual dynamics behind the quantitative scores. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to examine how interpersonal communication develops over time and how it influences student engagement, teacher performance, and school climate. By combining quantitative measurement with qualitative insight, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal communication as a key driver of effective and sustainable educational practice.

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