The Role of Effective Communication in Leadership: A Literature Review

Susan Febriantina[1], Aisya Fajri Salsabila[2], Herdina Danisworo[3], Marcellia Fauzia[4], Muhammad Ajib Albana[5]

[1]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; susanfebriantina@unj.ac.id
[2]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; aisya_1712422068@mhs.unj.ac.id
[3]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; herdina_1712422036@mhs.unj.ac.id
[4]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; marcellia_1712422042@mhs.unj.ac.id;
[5]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; muhammad_1712422057@mhs.unj.ac.id

Article history:	Abstract
Received: 28 December 2024 **Revised**: 02 January 2025 **Accepted:** 29 January 2025	Effective communication is crucial for leadership, particularly in the digital era. This study conducts a systematic literature review to examine key frameworks and empirical findings on leadership communication. It explores the adaptation of communication styles, the impact of digital transformation, and strategies for overcoming communication barriers. The findings indicate that effective communication enhances team performance, strengthens relationships, and aligns organizational goals. In digital and hybrid environments, leaders should leverage non-verbal cues and interactive technologies to improve engagement and productivity. Additionally, tailored communication training is essential for fostering adaptive leadership. This study offers valuable insights for designing leadership development programs and organizational communication strategies to address modern challenges and ensure long-term success.
Keywords	Leadership; Effective Communication; Digital Transformation; Organizational Success; Communication Barriers

Corresponding Author
Aisya Fajri Salsabila
Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia; **aisya_1712422068@mhs.unj.ac.id**

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is central to leadership and serves as a key differentiator between successful and unsuccessful leaders in achieving organizational goals. In an increasingly complex and dynamic business environment, a leader's ability to articulate a vision, inspire teams, and foster meaningful relationships through effective communication is more critical than ever. Additionally, the era of digital disruption presents both challenges and opportunities, prompting a reassessment of traditional leadership communication paradigms.

Recent research underscores this shift. Rahman et al. (2023), reveal that digital transformation, accelerated by the global pandemic, has fundamentally reshaped leadership communication paradigms. This finding aligns with the work of Liu and Thompson (2022), who identify a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms that link leaders' communication skills to organizational effectiveness, particularly within digital-age organizations.

The complexity of leadership communication in the digital era is further highlighted by recent empirical data. A longitudinal study by Chen et al. (2024), indicates that 67% of organizational project failures can be attributed to ineffective leadership communication. Similarly, Martínez-López et al. (2023) report that only 34% of leaders feel adequately competent in managing virtual teams. These

findings emphasize the need for leaders to develop and refine their communication skills to navigate the evolving digital landscape effectively.

As the digital era progresses, organizations must increasingly leverage technology to enhance productivity. However, this transformation also introduces new challenges, particularly in leadership communication. Wijaya et al. (2024) highlighted that 45% of technology companies in Indonesia experience communication challenges between leaders and teams, significantly affecting productivity and employee retention. These findings are further supported by Suharto and Lee (2023), who established a strong correlation between leadership communication effectiveness and employee engagement in Indonesian technology companies.

To address these challenges, leaders in the digital age must effectively utilize various communication channels to bridge gaps within hybrid and remote teams. A preliminary study of 50 CEOs from Indonesian technology companies revealed that 78% identified communication as their primary leadership challenge, particularly in managing dispersed teams. This finding aligns with research by Kim et al. (2024), which underscores the urgency of optimizing communication strategies to navigate contemporary organizational challenges.

This study employs a systematic literature review to integrate empirical findings and theoretical frameworks from existing research, offering an in-depth analysis of how effective communication functions as a strategic tool for enhancing organizational effectiveness. By examining best practices and emerging trends, this research aims to contribute significantly to both leadership theory and practice in the digital era. The study's findings can serve as a foundation for developing leadership training programs and organizational communication strategies that are more adaptive to modern challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Leadership

Leadership originates from the word "lead," which encompasses two main aspects: the leader as the subject and the led as the object. The term "lead" also includes concepts such as directing, fostering, managing, guiding, and influencing. A leader holds both physical and spiritual responsibility for the success of the activities they oversee.

Leadership can be defined as the manner in which an individual interacts with their environment and actively participates in achieving their life goals (Bashori et al., 2020). According to Syaiful, leadership involves managing a group by motivating others to achieve a common goal. Similarly, Rivadah et al. (2021) describe leadership as an individual's inner strength to lead and influence others in the workplace to accomplish objectives.

Scholars have proposed various definitions of leadership. For instance, Rauch and Behling define leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group to achieve specific goals (Biwilfa, 2023). Additionally, George R. Terry characterizes leadership as a relationship in which a leader influences individuals to consciously cooperate in task-related activities, voluntarily striving to achieve group objectives (Muah et al., 2019).

Communication

Communication is a fundamental aspect of organizational functioning. Organizational communication refers to the process of transmitting information and ideas among members in a reciprocal manner to achieve established goals. Effective communication fosters mutual understanding among employees and between employees and their superiors, thereby enhancing collaboration.

The term "communication" originates from the Latin word "communicatus," which means "sharing" or "belonging to all." In English, communication refers to the process of sharing information among individuals engaged in communicative interactions. According to Devito (as cited in Pohan & Fitria, 2021), communication involves the transmission and reception of messages by one or more individuals within a particular context, with the presence of noise that may distort the message. This process also includes feedback mechanisms that allow for clarification and response. Similarly, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley define communication as the process by which an individual (the communicator) conveys stimuli, often in the form of words, with the intent of influencing the behavior of others (the audience) (Pohan & Fitria, 2021). Communication occurs through the use of various symbols, including words, images, and numbers.

Rogers and Kincaid (as cited in Mucharam, 2022) describe communication as a process in which two or more individuals create or exchange information to achieve mutual understanding. Likewise, Berelson and Steiner define communication as the exchange of ideas, information, and emotions through symbols, such as words, images, graphics, and other tools. Ruben and Stewart (as cited in Mucharam, 2022) further elaborate that human communication is a process through which individuals in relationships, groups, organizations, and societies generate and utilize information to interact with one another and their environment.

In conclusion, communication is a crucial process in organizations, facilitating the reciprocal exchange of information, ideas, and messages among members to achieve common objectives. Effective communication enhances collaboration, ensures clarity, and contributes to the overall success of an organization.

Johari Window Theory Model

The Johari Window theory, developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955, aims to enhance interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and self-understanding. This model categorizes self-perception and external perception into four distinct areas. The first area, the Open Area, includes information that is known to both the individual and others. The second area, the Blind Area, consists of information that others perceive about the individual but of which the individual is unaware. The third area, the Hidden Area, encompasses information that the individual knows but chooses to withhold from others. Lastly, the Unknown Area contains information that is unknown to both the individual and others, often representing untapped potential.

In the context of leadership, expanding the Open Area fosters trust within a team. Reducing the Blind Area through feedback helps leaders gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. A transparent leader actively minimizes the Hidden Area, thereby enhancing team engagement and trust. Additionally, exploring the Unknown Area through training, mentorship, or self-reflection allows leaders to discover and develop hidden potential within themselves and their team members.

According to Anita (2024), Nasukah identifies six essential communication traits for effective leadership: gentleness, refraining from harsh speech, avoiding a hard-hearted demeanor, practicing forgiveness, engaging in deliberation, and committing to decisions. These traits contribute to a leader's ability to build strong interpersonal relationships and maintain a cohesive team dynamic.

Communication Styles in Leadership

Communication styles in leadership play a crucial role in determining a leader's effectiveness in influencing and guiding a group toward shared objectives. These styles reflect the interpersonal behaviors leaders employ in specific situations to elicit desired responses or reactions. According to Sendjaya, there are six primary communication styles: the Controlling Style, which is authoritative; the Equalitarian Style, which emphasizes equality and two-way communication; the Structuring Style, which focuses on delivering structured information; the Dynamic Style, which is aggressive and

action-oriented; the Relinquishing Style, which accepts others' ideas; and the Withdrawal Style, which involves avoiding communication.

The selection of a communication style largely depends on the context, objectives, and characteristics of the leader. Effective communication styles not only facilitate clear message delivery but also enhance the relationship between leaders and followers, fostering a collaborative and productive work environment. Among these styles, the Equalitarian Style is often regarded as the most effective, whereas the Controlling and Withdrawal Styles are more likely to impede meaningful interactions. In leadership, the ability to adapt communication styles flexibly is essential for addressing diverse challenges and situations (Adywanti, 2022).

Barriers in Leadership Communication

Communication barriers in leadership frequently present challenges within various organizations. One of the primary barriers is misunderstanding, which often arises from unclear information conveyed by leaders to subordinates. The absence of two-way communication further exacerbates this issue, as it prevents employees from seeking clarification or expressing their informational needs. Additionally, the laissez-faire leadership style assumes that subordinates inherently understand their responsibilities without detailed guidance, thereby increasing ambiguity. This lack of direct incentives or personal direction can lead to decreased motivation among employees (Pratama, 2020).

Another significant communication barrier is ineffective communication, which hinders the comprehensive dissemination of an organization's vision, mission, and goals. The absence of feedback mechanisms from subordinates prevents the timely detection of errors and the achievement of organizational objectives. Physical barriers, such as geographic distance and technological limitations, further obstruct communication. Additionally, differences in understanding between the communicator and the recipient can result in message misinterpretation. Leaders who lack strong communication skills may struggle to convey messages in a manner that is clear and comprehensible to subordinates (Pohan & Fitria, 2021).

In the educational sector, communication barriers in leadership often stem from a lack of discipline and compliance among teachers regarding school policies established by principals. These challenges are frequently influenced by perceptions of injustice and excessive workloads. Resistance to policies, particularly when they are perceived as unfair or burdensome, poses a significant obstacle. Furthermore, the absence of incentives and rewards for disciplined and proactive teachers diminishes motivation, while inadequate facilities and infrastructure further hinder effective teaching performance. These barriers illustrate the profound impact that ineffective communication can have on both individual and organizational success (Hanim et al., 2020).

The Relationship between Communication and Leadership

The relationship between leadership and communication within the context of teamwork is highly significant, as effective leadership enhances cooperation and overall team performance. Leaders who possess the ability to influence and guide their team members can foster synergy in the pursuit of common goals. Furthermore, strong leadership emphasizes the development of individual potential, thereby contributing to collective success.

Effective communication serves as a fundamental component in supporting leadership roles. Through clear and empathetic communication, leaders can provide direction, establish positive interpersonal relationships, and ensure that team objectives are well understood (Mandagi et al., 2023). The use of easily comprehensible symbols and a responsive approach to addressing team members' needs can further enhance participation and motivation.

Moreover, effective leadership and communication contribute directly to team effectiveness. This effectiveness manifests in various aspects, including task achievement, team member well-being, long-term team sustainability, innovation, and inter-team collaboration (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023). Strong

communication skills enable leaders to manage conflicts constructively and reinforce the team's commitment to shared objectives.

When implemented effectively, leadership not only serves as a tool for achieving results but also as a mechanism for fostering strong working relationships. Leaders who employ effective communication strategies can cultivate a collaborative and productive work environment, ultimately enhancing the team's ability to navigate both internal and external challenges.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a literature review approach to examine the role of effective communication in leadership. The research relies on secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed scientific journals, academic textbooks, and conference proceedings that are pertinent to the research topic. The selection of literature is guided by predefined relevance criteria, which include the use of specific keywords such as "effective communication," "leadership," and "organizational communication." Additionally, sources are evaluated based on their academic credibility, the reputation of the publishing journal or institution, the recency of publication (with a preference for works published within the last ten years), and accessibility.

The data collection process involves systematically searching for relevant literature using the identified keywords across academic databases and digital repositories. Once the relevant studies are gathered, they are subjected to a rigorous evaluation process to ensure alignment with the research objectives. The validity and reliability of the selected literature are assessed by considering factors such as peer-review status, citation impact, and methodological rigor.

For data analysis, this study employs a thematic analysis approach, wherein the collected literature is systematically examined to identify recurring themes and patterns related to leadership communication. Key thematic areas explored include leadership communication styles, common communication barriers within organizational settings, and models of effective communication. This analytical approach facilitates the synthesis of existing knowledge and enables a comprehensive understanding of how communication influences leadership effectiveness.

The findings of this study are expected to yield valuable insights into the critical role of communication in leadership, offering theoretical and practical contributions to the field of organizational communication. By synthesizing existing literature, this research aims to bridge gaps in knowledge, propose implications for leadership practices, and provide a foundation for future empirical studies on the subject

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The search for scientific articles from various sources like Google Scholar identified 10 articles presented in a table 1 as follows:

Tabel 1. Articles Analyzed

Title	Author, Year	Research Objectives	Methods	Findings	Implications
E-Leadership in IM: Nonverbal Communication	Darics, 2020	Examines leadership communication via text-based IM, focusing on nonverbal cues.	Micro-analysis of IM interactions in a virtual team, using GPT and linguistic analysis.	Leaders use text-based nonverbal cues (punctuation, emoticons) to balance task and relational goals.	Digital communication training is crucial for leadership effectiveness in remote work.
Leadership & Employee Performance	Sukmawati et al., 2020	Analyzes the impact of leadership, communication, training, work ethos, and individual traits on performance.	Quantitative study via surveys and regression analysis.	Leadership and communication boost performance; training has a negative impact.	Organizations should improve leadership training and align training with employee needs.
Leadership, Communication & Organizational Effectiveness	Julianto & Carnarez, 2021	Evaluates leadership, communication, performance, and organizational effectiveness in professional organizations.	Qualitative literature review with inductive analysis.	Leadership and communication drive organizational success; effectiveness depends on adaptability and culture.	Leadership and communication training enhance long-term organizational performance.
Millennial Leadership & Communication	Pohan, 2019	Explores leadership in the millennial era, emphasizing digital communication.	Literature review of leadership and millennial communication strategies.	Leaders must adapt to digital tools for engagement and innovation.	Leaders should develop digital communication skills to engage millennials.
Leadership Intelligence (CI2) in Social Media	Gamayanto et al., 2019	Develops a leadership framework for ethical leaders on social media using the Johari Window.	Survey of 100 respondents, interviews, and scale-based assessments.	Effective leadership on social media requires ethical communication strategies.	Organizations should train leaders in digital ethics and responsible social media use.
School Leadership & Communication	Nasukah et al., 2020	Identifies how school leaders' communication improves institutional performance.	Qualitative study using literature review and content analysis.	Effective communication is key to school leadership and performance.	Training in leadership communication enhances institutional success.

Organizational Leadership & Communication	Zega, 2023	Addresses the role of communication in leadership effectiveness.	Literature review on leadership and organizational communication.	Strong communication fosters motivation and collaboration.	Leaders should refine communication to boost team performance.
CPPT & Interprofessional Communication in Hospitals	Sukawan et al., 2021	Examines how CPPT improves communication in interprofessional collaboration.	Literature review on CPPT in healthcare.	CPPT enhances patient data integration and decision-making.	Hospitals should adopt CPPT for improved healthcare collaboration.
Communication & Conflict Management	Siregar & Usriyah, 2021	Analyzes how communication aids conflict management in organizations.	Literature review on conflict resolution strategies.	Effective communication prevents and resolves conflicts.	Leaders should strengthen communication to foster a positive work environment.
Leadership in Educational Management	Suryadi et al., 2023	Explores collaboration between teachers and parents for student character building.	Literature review with qualitative analysis.	Collaboration strengthens character development and learning outcomes.	Schools should promote teacher-parent collaboration for holistic education.

Effective communication is the foundation of leadership, particularly in today's complex digital era. Darics (2020) highlights the crucial role of digital communication—especially through instant messaging platforms—in supporting adaptive leadership. Leaders must not only convey messages clearly but also leverage non-verbal elements such as emoticons, punctuation, and capitalization to foster positive team relationships. In this context, digital non-verbal communication serves as a strategic tool for aligning transactional (task-oriented) goals with relational (interpersonal) team dynamics. These findings underscore the need for specialized training to help leaders optimize digital communication strategies and enhance team collaboration, particularly in hybrid and remote work environments.

Sukmawati et al. (2020) further emphasize the importance of communication in leadership by demonstrating its significant influence on employee performance. Their study shows that leaders who effectively integrate different communication styles create work environments that support productivity and motivation. However, the research also highlights challenges, such as training programs that fail to align with organizational needs, potentially hindering performance. To address this, organizations must design communication training programs that cater to both individual and collective needs.

Additionally, Julianto and Carnarez (2021) stress that effective communication not only facilitates organizational coordination but also strengthens interpersonal relationships, which are essential for achieving shared goals. Organizational effectiveness depends not only on strong leadership but also on a leader's ability to foster harmonious relationships with team members. This finding highlights the importance of cultivating an organizational culture that promotes open, transparent, and collaborative communication, ensuring synergy between leaders and subordinates.

In the context of the millennial workforce, Pohan (2019) argues that leaders must integrate digital technology into their communication strategies. As digital natives, millennials are more responsive to interactive and technology-driven communication approaches. Leaders who fail to adapt risk losing engagement with their millennial teams, potentially stifling organizational creativity and innovation. Therefore, mastering digital communication tools is essential for leaders to develop strategies that resonate with this generation's needs.

In the field of education, research by Nasukah et al. (2020) provides valuable insights into the role of effective communication among school principals. Their study highlights how strong communication skills enable principals to effectively distribute their institution's vision and mission, build partnerships with the school community, foster a conducive learning environment, and ultimately improve student achievement. This underscores the necessity for specialized communication training for educational leaders to maximize their institution's potential.

Overall, effective communication in leadership plays a vital role in enhancing organizational performance, fostering harmonious team relationships, and ensuring adaptability in dynamic work environments. In the digital age, non-verbal communication through technology has become an essential tool for leaders. Research suggests that organizations should invest in comprehensive communication training that not only covers technical skills but also considers individual needs and organizational culture. By adopting a holistic approach, communication can serve as a primary driver of organizational success and sustainability in the modern era.

5. CONCLUSION

Effective communication is a fundamental pillar of successful leadership, particularly in navigating the complexities of the digital era. Research indicates that leaders who communicate effectively can enhance team performance, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and align organizational goals. In the realm of digital leadership, non-verbal communication elements—such as emoticons, punctuation, and capitalization—can help convey messages more clearly and foster trust among team members. Additionally, effective communication serves as a catalyst for strong coordination and a collaborative work culture, as demonstrated in studies on professional organizations.

As technology evolves and modern organizations adapt to new demands, leaders must embrace adaptive communication strategies, particularly when managing multigenerational teams—including millennials—or operating in hybrid and remote work environments. In the education sector, effective communication is equally vital for school leadership, influencing both stakeholder engagement and institutional management efficiency.

To integrate these insights into leadership practices, organizations can take several concrete steps. First, they can provide digital communication training for leaders to enhance virtual communication skills and optimize the use of technology in team interactions. Second, fostering a culture of open communication and feedback-driven dialogue can create a more responsive and engaged work environment. Third, leaders should tailor their communication approaches to suit their teams and organizational culture, such as adopting an interactive style for millennial teams or a more structured approach for traditional workplaces.

By implementing relevant, flexible, and technology-driven communication strategies, leaders can navigate the challenges of the digital era more effectively and drive positive organizational outcomes. Ultimately, effective communication is not merely a tool but the foundation of adaptive, productive, and sustainable leadership.

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