



A Model of Communication Strategies Based on the Social Competencies Teachers to Strengthen Stakeholder Partnerships

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the dynamics of early childhood education teachers' social competencies in communication practices, identify the communication strategies employed, examine communication barriers, and formulate a social competence-based communication strategy model to strengthen stakeholder partnerships. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of 12 teachers, 3 school principals, and 6 parents or school committee members in Grobogan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and were analyzed thematically using an interactive model. The results indicate that teachers' social competencies are dynamic, particularly in terms of interpersonal adaptability, empathy development, and the use of digital communication in interactions with stakeholders; however, these competencies have not yet been systematically integrated into structured communication strategies. Communication practices tend to develop adaptively but remain dominated by one-way, informative communication patterns. Communication barriers are multidimensional, encompassing individual, social, and structural factors. This study produced a social competence-based communication strategy model that emphasizes dialogic, empathetic, and collaborative communication in building stakeholder partnerships. The originality of this study lies in the integration of social competence and communication strategies into a single empirically grounded conceptual model. Theoretically, this study contributes to stakeholder-based educational communication research, while practically providing guidance for early childhood education teachers in developing more effective and collaborative communication practices.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a crucial foundation for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development; therefore, the quality of educational services at this stage significantly determines their future educational success. In this context, teachers play a role not only as learning facilitators but also as social agents who bridge the relationship between schools and various educational stakeholders, including parents and the community. Teachers' social competencies are key to fostering effective and collaborative interactions within the educational environment (Larasati & Dewi, 2025; Nisa & Sujarwo, 2020a; Nurfitriani Lustian et al., 2026)

Social competencies of early childhood education teachers include interpersonal communication skills, empathy, emotional regulation, and the ability to build harmonious relationships with stakeholders. Research indicates that effective communication between teachers and parents significantly influences parental involvement as well as children's

social-emotional development (Fujisawa, 2025; Nurjanah et al., 2023). Additionally, the quality of teachers' communication contributes to enhancing children's learning motivation and the success of early childhood education programs (Nisa & Sujarwo, 2020b; Sumbawa et al., 2022). However, communication practices between early childhood educators and stakeholders in the field still face various challenges. Several studies indicate issues such as ineffective communication, low parental participation, and limitations in teachers' ability to establish empathetic and sustainable communication (S. N. Aushofia & Tejaningsih, 2025; Zultiar et al., 2025). Furthermore, the use of digital media such as WhatsApp in educational communication is often not strategically optimized, which has the potential to cause miscommunication and information gaps both referential and affective due to limitations in interpreting text-based messages (Syahrul et al., 2023).

Other research indicates that communication via WhatsApp tends to be unstructured and can blur professional boundaries between teachers and parents (Traeger-Soudry et al., 2025). Furthermore, the use of this platform often functions merely as a one-way channel for information dissemination, which has the potential to create information gaps and misunderstandings (Aviva & Simon, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the effectiveness of communication between teachers and parents via WhatsApp is determined not only by ease of access to the platform but also by users' communication skills and digital literacy. Research indicates that communication is often suboptimal due to poorly structured group management and high message volume, leading to confusion in identifying important information (Yana et al., 2021).

From a scientific perspective, most previous research has primarily focused on the relationship between teacher communication and child development or parental involvement, as well as examining teachers' competencies in general. Meanwhile, research specifically addressing communication strategies based on the social competencies of early childhood educators remains limited, particularly in qualitative approaches rooted in local contexts (Larasati & Dewi, 2025; Nurjanah et al., 2023). This indicates a research gap that needs to be addressed. These communication issues indicate that the barriers encountered are not merely technical problems or limitations of digital media. Communication failures reflect the suboptimal level of teachers' social competencies in fostering dialogic interactions, empathy, responsiveness, and participatory engagement with stakeholders. In many cases, communication remains informative rather than relational, positioning parents more as recipients of information than as educational partners. Consequently, low social competence contributes to low parental participation, weak trust-building, and suboptimal collaboration between schools and stakeholders.

On the other hand, recent developments indicate that educational communication is shifting toward a collaborative and participatory paradigm, in which stakeholders are positioned as active partners in the educational process. The dialogic communication perspective emphasizes the importance of equal, two-way interaction for building shared understanding (Yuliyanto et al., 2024). In this context, communication is not merely informative but also dialogic, interactive, and empathy-based to support active engagement and collaboration between teachers and parents (S. Aushofia & Tejaningsih, 2025; Bustomi, 2024). This transformation reflects a shift toward more democratic and participatory educational communication practices.

Teachers' social competencies are a key factor in building effective communication with parents as educational stakeholders. These competencies include the ability to empathize, interpersonal communication skills, and sensitivity to the family's social background, which play a role in creating positive and collaborative relationships (Jennings

& Greenberg, 2009; Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Teachers with strong social competencies tend to be able to build dialogic and trust-based communication, thereby encouraging parents' active involvement in the educational process (Epstein, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The model proposed in this study is not merely conceptual but also provides practical communication steps that teachers can implement, such as dialogic communication, empathy-based approaches, participatory digital communication, and collaboration mechanisms with stakeholders. Furthermore, this model accounts for the sociocultural characteristics of communication in Grobogan and the Indonesian educational context, which prioritizes interpersonal closeness and collective values as integral components of school-parent relationships.

The strength of this study lies in the integration of teachers' social competencies, educational communication strategies, and stakeholder approaches within a comprehensive analytical framework. This approach is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of early childhood education. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: (1) to describe the social competencies of early childhood education teachers in their communication practices with stakeholders, (2) to identify effective communication strategies to enhance partnerships with stakeholders, and (3) to formulate a communication strategy model based on the social competencies of early childhood education teachers that can be applied in the context of early childhood education.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand communication strategies based on the social competencies of early childhood education teachers in building partnerships with stakeholders. This approach was chosen because it allows for contextual and comprehensive exploration of phenomena within a natural setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

The research participants consisted of 12 early childhood education teachers, 3 school principals, and 6 parents/school committee representatives, selected through purposive sampling. The selection of informants considered their direct involvement in school communication practices as well as their ability to provide information relevant to the research focus (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study was conducted at several early childhood education institutions in Kedungjati Subdistrict, Grobogan Regency, Central Java, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) the institution actively communicates with parents, (2) has at least three teachers, and (3) is willing to serve as a research site. A case study design was used to explore communication practices in depth within a specific local context. Data were collected through three main techniques, namely:

- 1) Semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers, principals, and parents to explore their experiences and the communication strategies they employ.
- 2) Participatory observation, conducted in real-life interaction settings such as child pickup activities, parent meetings, and communication in school forums.
- 3) Documentary analysis, including the examination of documents such as WhatsApp group chats, meeting minutes, and school work plans.

Data analysis was conducted thematically using an interactive model (Miles et al., 2014) consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions/verification. The analysis process was carried out cyclically through open coding, categorization, and the identification of main themes related to social competencies and communication strategies of early childhood education teachers.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation, as well as verification with informants to ensure the researcher's interpretations align with participants' experiences. Additionally, the researcher conducted an audit trail to maintain transparency in the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study adhered to ethical considerations by obtaining written consent from participants, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and using the data solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

The research results revealed four main themes, namely: (1) the dynamics of teachers' social competencies in communication practices, (2) adaptively evolving communication strategies, (3) multidimensional communication barriers, and (4) the need to develop a model of communication strategies based on social competencies.

Dynamics of Teachers' Social Competence in Communication Practice

The research findings indicate that the social competencies of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers are reflected in their ability to establish interpersonal communication that is both emotional and contextual. Most communication with parents occurs informally, particularly during child pickup, but it remains brief and unstructured.

"Communication usually takes place when picking up children or via WhatsApp, but it is not always in-depth." (T1)

In addition to interpersonal communication skills, teachers also demonstrate efforts to build empathy in their interactions with parents. Teachers strive to adapt their communication approach based on the parents' circumstances and characteristics.

"If there are parents who seem less active, I usually try to contact them personally so they feel more comfortable." (T5)

These findings indicate that teachers possess social sensitivity in building relationships with stakeholders. However, such empathetic communication practices still depend on individual initiative and have not yet become part of the school's structured communication strategy. Additionally, there are variations in communication skills among teachers. More experienced teachers tend to be more adaptive and confident in interacting with parents compared to newer teachers.

Adaptively Evolving Communication Strategies

The study found that early childhood education teachers' communication strategies develop adaptively based on practical field experience. The communication strategies used are situational and tailored to the needs of the interaction at hand.

Two-Way Communication That Remains Limited

Teachers have made efforts to establish two-way communication with parents, but communication practices are still dominated by the transmission of information from teachers to parents. Parents' responses tend to be limited, so communication has not yet fully taken place in a dialogic manner.

"We encourage teachers not only to provide information but also to seek feedback from parents." (P1)

The Dominance of Digital Media in Communication

WhatsApp has become the primary means of communication between teachers and parents because it facilitates the rapid dissemination of information. However, digital communication is still dominated by one-way information sharing and has not yet fostered active dialogue.

"We use WhatsApp groups to share information about our children's activities and progress." (T2)

Observation results indicate that most interactions in WhatsApp groups consist of the dissemination of school information without active discussion between teachers and parents.

A Personal Approach as a Communication Strategy

Teachers use a personal approach, especially when discussing sensitive issues related to children's development. This strategy is considered more effective in building openness and trust with parents.

"If there is an issue with a student, I usually discuss it privately so that parents feel more comfortable." (T4)

Information Transparency as a Form of Accountability

Teachers strive to provide information regarding children's development as a form of professional responsibility to parents.

"I find it helpful when teachers provide progress reports so I know what needs to be supported at home." (H1)

However, this practice of information transparency has not been consistently implemented by all teachers and still depends on individual initiative.

Multidimensional Communication Barriers

The research findings indicate that communication barriers between early childhood education teachers and stakeholders cannot be understood as merely technical issues but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon involving the interaction of individual, social, and structural factors. These barriers not only affect the effectiveness of communication but also impact the quality of the partnership formed between schools and stakeholders.

Uneven Parent Participation

The level of parental participation in school communication varies. Some parents actively respond, while others tend to be passive and only read messages without providing feedback.

"Sometimes parents just read the messages but don't respond, making it difficult to establish two-way communication." (T3)

This situation results in communication remaining one-way, and parental involvement is not yet optimal.

Teachers' Time Constraints and Workload

Teachers face time constraints in maintaining intensive communication with parents due to heavy teaching loads and administrative tasks.

"Classroom activities are quite packed, so communication with parents is sometimes not optimal." (T1)

Differences in Parents' Backgrounds

Differences in parents' educational levels, socioeconomic conditions, and digital literacy skills affect the effectiveness of communication by teachers.

"Not all parents have the same understanding, so the communication approach must be tailored accordingly." (P2)

Limitations of Digital Media Use

Although digital media has been widely used, its application remains limited as a means of conveying information and has not been optimally utilized to foster participatory interaction. Observation results indicate that communication within WhatsApp groups is still dominated by informative messages from teachers without active follow-up interaction from parents.

Synthesis of Findings and Directions for Developing a Communication Strategy Model

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that early childhood education (PAUD) teachers' communication practices remain partial, adaptive, and dominated by one-way communication. This situation highlights the need for a communication strategy model that integrates teachers' social competencies with dialogic, empathetic, and collaborative communication to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders. Thus, this model not only addresses the gap between communication practices and needs but also offers a more systematic conceptual framework for building sustainable partnerships between early childhood education (PAUD) teachers and stakeholders. The following is a communication strategy model based on the social competencies of PAUD teachers:



Figure 1. Communication Strategy Model Based on Early Childhood Education Teachers' Social Competencies

The diagram above shows that teachers' social competencies form the foundation for building a communication strategy that is dialogic, empathetic, and collaborative with stakeholders. This strategy fosters strong partnerships, increases parental participation, and supports children's development. The model also highlights the presence of continuous feedback that helps teachers dynamically adjust their communication strategies.

Discussion

These findings confirm that communication in early childhood education is a complex and multidimensional process that cannot be understood in isolation. Therefore, this discussion is organized around four main themes emerging from the analysis: (1) the dynamics of teachers' social competencies in communication practices, (2) the adaptive development of communication strategies, (3) multidimensional communication barriers, and (4) the need to develop a communication strategy model based on social competencies. These four themes are then analyzed in depth by linking the research findings to theory and previous research results to strengthen the scientific contribution of this study.

1) The Dynamics of Teachers' Social Competence in Communication Practice

Research findings indicate that the social competencies of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers are not static but rather dynamic and develop through daily communication with stakeholders. These competencies are reflected in interpersonal communication skills, empathy, and the ability to adapt to different communication situations. In practice, teachers act not only as providers of information but also as social mediators who bridge the relationship between the school and stakeholders.

These research findings reinforce the view that social competence is a contextual ability that develops through ongoing social interaction (Parnawi & Taridi, 2018; Wijaya, Ginting, et al., 2023; Nisa, 2021; Fujisawa et al., 2025). However, this study found that teachers' social competencies are still applied individually and have not yet been integrated into systematic school communication strategies. This situation indicates a gap between the social competencies teachers possess and their implementation in educational communication practices.

Additionally, teachers' communication skills are influenced by their experience and interpersonal adaptability (Reiljan & Paltser, 2015; Rickert & Skinner, 2022). More experienced teachers tend to be more flexible and confident in establishing communication with parents compared to newer teachers. This indicates that teachers' social competencies are not only related to technical communication skills but are also influenced by social interaction experiences within an educational context.

2) The Development of Adaptively Evolving Communication Strategies

The findings of this study align with research indicating that teachers' communication strategies are often not built on formal conceptual frameworks but rather develop adaptively through practical field experience. Teachers' communication practices tend to be contextual and pragmatic, tailored to the needs of learning situations and daily interactions (Rahmani, 2011).

Furthermore, research findings are often considered irrelevant or difficult to apply in real-world contexts, thus limiting their practical implementation (Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003). This indicates that teachers' communication strategies remain within the realm of *practical knowledge* that develops adaptively through experience, rather than through theory-based strategic planning. Furthermore, the communication strategies identified are still dominated by one-way communication, which functions as a means of conveying information.

The findings of this study align with the literature indicating that educational communication practices are still often dominated by one-way communication patterns that function as information delivery. From a critical pedagogy perspective, such communication models are categorized as monological communication, positioning learners or stakeholders as passive recipients (Ramis Salas, 2018). Conversely, modern educational communication emphasizes a dialogic and participatory approach, where the communication process occurs bidirectionally to build shared understanding and encourage active engagement among stakeholders (Abdul Razzak, 2020). Therefore, the shift from informative communication toward dialogic communication has become a necessity in contemporary educational practice.

3) Multidimensional Communication Barriers

This study indicates that communication barriers in the context of early childhood education are not merely technical but are also influenced by social, cultural, and structural factors. Low parental participation, teachers' time constraints, and differences

in educational and socioeconomic backgrounds are the primary factors affecting the effectiveness of communication (Ozmen et al., 2016).

In the context of Grobogan society, which still maintains a hierarchical communication culture, the relationship between teachers and parents tends to be formal, leading parents to often choose to remain passive rather than express their opinions directly. This situation impacts the effectiveness of the dialogic communication expected in participatory education.

Additionally, administrative burdens and time constraints mean that communication with parents has not yet been positioned as an integral part of a teacher's professional duties. Consequently, communication often occurs incidentally and is not carried out in a planned manner. This study also found that the use of digital media has not fully supported participatory communication. WhatsApp is still more widely used as a medium for disseminating information rather than as a tool for collaborative interaction. These findings indicate that communication barriers in early childhood education are multidimensional and require a more contextual and participatory approach (Blitch, 2017; Calderon-Villarreal et al., 2025).

This aligns with the concept of communication as a social process influenced by various external factors (Dong et al., 2021). Thus, the communication barriers identified in this study underscore the importance of a multidimensional approach in designing effective communication strategies.

4) The Need to Develop a Social Competence-Based Communication Strategy Model

Based on the overall findings, this study indicates the need to develop a communication strategy model based on the social competencies of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers. This need arises because current communication practices remain adaptive, informative, and have not yet been integrated into a systematic and collaborative communication framework.

The model developed in this study positions teachers' social competencies as the primary foundation for building communication with stakeholders. These social competencies are manifested through dialogic communication strategies, a personalized approach, the participatory use of digital media, transparency of information, and active collaboration with parents and the community (Rasdiany et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of social competencies and communication practices has been shown to contribute to the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and the improvement of overall educational quality (Khalik et al., n.d.; Wijaya, Rehna Ginting, et al., 2023). Thus, effective communication strategies cannot be separated from teachers' social competencies as the primary foundation of educational interaction practices.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the integration of social competencies and communication strategies into a single conceptual model grounded in empirical practices within the Grobogan early childhood education (PAUD) setting. This study demonstrates that the success of educational communication is not solely determined by the use of communication media but also by teachers' ability to build empathetic, inclusive, and collaborative interpersonal relationships.

This study reinforces the concept that teachers' social competencies are a key factor in educational communication. Furthermore, this study expands the field of educational communication by integrating a social competency perspective and a stakeholder approach within the context of early childhood education (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Practically, this study provides recommendations for early childhood education



teachers to: (1) develop dialogic communication, (2) enhance empathy in interactions, (3) strategically utilize digital media, and (4) build partnerships with stakeholders.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the social competencies of early childhood education teachers serve as the primary foundation for building communication with stakeholders. However, current communication practices remain largely informative and unstructured, as communication strategies develop adaptively and lack a clear conceptual framework. Furthermore, multidimensional communication barriers highlight the complexity of interactions within the early childhood education context. This study produced a communication strategy model based on teachers' social competencies that emphasizes dialogic, empathetic, and collaborative communication in building partnerships with stakeholders. This model provides a theoretical contribution to the development of educational communication studies as well as practical implications for improving the quality of communication among early childhood education teachers.

Recommendation

Based on the research findings, early childhood education teachers need more specific training, such as training in dialogic communication, empathy-based conflict management, and pedagogical digital communication literacy to improve the quality of communication with stakeholders. Additionally, schools and policymakers need to integrate stakeholder communication competencies into teacher performance evaluations and develop school communication guidelines that are more participatory and collaborative. Future research is recommended to test the implementation of this model in a broader context using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches.

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