

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN EXPERIENCE-BASED EDUCATION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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### Abstract:

Interpersonal communication between teachers and parents in experience-based education at the elementary school level faces challenges such as a lack of openness, empathy, and shared understanding, which can hinder effective learning. This study aims to analyze the interpersonal communication between teachers and parents in experience-based education, identify barriers, and develop effective interpersonal communication strategies. The study is grounded in DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory (openness, empathy, support, positive attitude, equality), Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory (authenticity, unconditional acceptance), and John Dewey's Experience-Based Learning approach. This research employs a qualitative method with a postpositivist paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using a thematic approach. The findings indicate that openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positive attitudes, equality, authenticity, and unconditional acceptance in interpersonal communication play a crucial role in enhancing parental involvement in experience-based education. Teachers use various communication strategies, including face-to-face interactions and digital media such as WhatsApp, to foster more inclusive communication. However, major barriers identified include limited direct interaction, differences in expectations between teachers and parents, and technological access constraints affecting communication effectiveness. The novelty of this study lies in the development of interpersonal communication strategies that integrate humanistic and experiential approaches in teacher-parent interactions. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on teachers' communication within the classroom, this study addresses the gap by proposing an interpersonal communication model based on authenticity and unconditional acceptance, which can enhance parental engagement in experience-based education at the elementary school level.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Communication, Experience-Based Education, Teacher-Parent, Humanistic Theory, Post-Positivism

## INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication between teachers and parents plays a strategic role in supporting the success of experience-based education at the elementary school level. In other words, effective and collaborative communication between teachers and parents not only supports children but also creates a conducive and balanced learning environment (Triwardhani, 2020).

DeVito's (2019) interpersonal communication theory highlights that communication must fulfill several fundamental principles, such as openness, empathy, support, equality, and a positive attitude. During the pandemic, teacher-parent communication was often hindered by the limitations of direct interaction. Teachers and parents could only communicate through screens, reducing the



non-verbal dimensions of communication, such as facial expressions and body language, which typically help clarify messages. This led to miscommunication, particularly when discussing students' development, which requires deep understanding and empathy from both parties.

Carl Rogers (1961), in his humanistic approach, posits that effective interpersonal communication must be based on unconditional positive regard, empathy, and deep communication. During the pandemic, many parents struggled to fulfill their role as learning companions for their children due to a lack of understanding of the lesson materials and work demands that had to be managed from home. On the other hand, teachers also felt overwhelmed in monitoring students' progress online and providing emotional support, which is usually easier to convey in face-to-face interactions. This situation illustrates the gap between expectations and reality in teacher-parent communication during the pandemic (Widodo, 2021).

Previous research has shown that effective interpersonal communication strategies can enhance parental involvement in children's education. For instance, a study by Harris and Lee (2019) found that using digital media such as WhatsApp could accelerate communication flow between teachers and parents, while Garcia et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of empathy and openness in building harmonious relationships.

Experience-based education, rooted in John Dewey's (1938) principles, emphasizes the significance of learning through direct experience and critical reflection. This approach not only aims to impart cognitive knowledge but also fosters students' social, emotional, and practical skills. The underlying assumption is that students can acquire richer learning experiences through active and personal involvement compared to passive exposure to concepts (Iman, S., Fatha, M., & Juliyana, S., 2021).

Experience-based education requires close collaboration between teachers and parents in its implementation. Teachers act as facilitators who help students connect their learning experiences with theoretical concepts, while parents support this process at home. Effective communication enables teachers and parents to exchange information regarding children's development, including challenges that students may face both at school and at home.

However, previous studies have shown that communication barriers often arise in teacher-parent relationships, such as time constraints, technological challenges, and gaps in understanding the objectives of experience-based learning. These issues can reduce the effectiveness of collaboration in supporting student learning. Carl Rogers (1961) emphasized the importance of elements such as empathy, openness, and unconditional acceptance in building healthy interpersonal communication, which can help overcome these barriers.

Through this study, the author aims to explore effective interpersonal communication patterns between teachers and parents in supporting experience-based education at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of adaptive and inclusive interpersonal communication strategies to strengthen collaboration between teachers and parents.

## METHODS

This study employs a postpositivist paradigm, where postpositivism emerged as a reaction to positivism in the 1970s and 1980s. It also utilizes a qualitative method with an in-depth case study approach at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi. Data were collected using three primary methods.

**In-Depth Interviews.** Conducted with three teachers and three parents to explore their experiences, perspectives, and challenges in interpersonal communication. The interviews focused on how both parties interact in supporting experience-based learning.



**Participant Observation.** The researcher was directly involved in school activities such as parent-teacher meetings, open classrooms, and student experience-based projects. This observation helped the researcher understand communication dynamics firsthand and identify potential barriers.

**Document Analysis.** School documents, including student progress reports, circular letters, and teacher-parent communication records, were analyzed to understand the patterns of written communication.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following three key steps: (1) coding data to identify major themes, (2) categorizing data based on relevant themes, and (3) interpreting findings to construct an effective interpersonal communication model. Data validity was ensured through data source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and confirmation with key informants.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interpersonal communication between teachers and parents in experience-based education encompasses several key elements, including openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positive attitudes, equality, authenticity, and positive acceptance. These elements are closely related to DeVito's interpersonal communication theory, Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, and John Dewey's experience-based education concept.

**Openness.** According to DeVito's (2011) interpersonal communication theory, openness is a crucial element in establishing effective communication. In this study, teachers and parents shared information through various media, including face-to-face meetings and WhatsApp. This finding supports the theory that openness helps build trust and enables better two-way communication. For instance, teachers provided student progress reports based on objective data such as assessments and observations. Unlike the study by Smith & Johnson (2018), which emphasized openness solely through face-to-face communication, this study found that technology, such as WhatsApp, expands accessibility and accelerates information delivery, demonstrating adaptation to the needs of the digital era.

**Empathy.** Carl Rogers (1961) emphasized the importance of empathy as a foundation for positive interpersonal relationships. Teachers in this study demonstrated empathy through concrete actions, such as home visits and prompt responses to student issues. This created deep emotional connections between teachers and parents, as illustrated in a case where a student lost money in class, and the homeroom teacher immediately addressed the situation. The study by Brown and Hall (2020) supports this finding, stating that teacher empathy not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also increases parental involvement in the educational process.

**Supportive Attitudes.** According to DeVito (2011), supportive attitudes involve providing motivation, recognition, and guidance. Teachers in this study demonstrated support through activities such as parent-teacher meetings at the beginning of the school year and guidance during report card distribution. These strategies strengthen teacher-parent collaboration, as also found in Latham's (2019) study, which showed that active teacher support positively influences parental involvement. However, challenges such as parents' lack of time to attend direct meetings need to be addressed, for example, by providing recordings or digital materials accessible anytime.

**Positive Attitudes.** Teachers' positive attitudes were reflected in their appreciation of parents and students. DeVito (2011) stated that positive attitudes strengthen interpersonal relationships by fostering mutual respect. In this study, teachers recognized parents who actively participated in

school activities, such as talent show events. However, recognition should be distributed evenly to ensure that all parents feel appreciated.

**Equality.** Equality in interpersonal communication fosters a peer-like relationship between teachers and parents. Teachers treated parents as equal partners, creating a comfortable communication environment. This aligns with Rogers' (1961) theory, which suggests that egalitarian relationships promote trust and active engagement. Informal approaches such as coffee mornings or open houses can further strengthen these relationships.

**Authenticity and Positive Acceptance.** Carl Rogers (1961) asserted that authenticity and unconditional acceptance are key elements in effective interpersonal relationships. In this study, teachers exhibited honesty in conveying information and accepted parents without prejudice.

**Communication Barriers.** Interpersonal communication barriers identified in this study can be categorized into two main areas: communication-related barriers and environmental and infrastructural constraints. These categories are interconnected and influence the effectiveness of teacher-parent relationships.

**Communication Barriers.** Parents' Busy Schedules, Many parents found it difficult to respond to communication promptly due to work commitments. Fear or Hesitation: Some parents were reluctant to ask questions, fearing they might be perceived as interfering too much in school affairs. One-way communication: Teachers sometimes provide information without allowing space for parental feedback.

**Environmental and Infrastructural Constraints.** Limited Technological Access, Some parents faced difficulties in accessing digital communication tools. Geographical Distance, Physical distance affected participation in school activities. Lack of Coordination and inconsistent communication between teachers and parents led to misunderstandings.

**Communication Development Strategies.** Effective interpersonal communication strategies between teachers and parents in experience-based education at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi include:

**Support and Collaboration.** Teachers developed parenting programs and collaborative activities such as thematic workshops for parents. This aligns with DeVito's (2011) theory and Carl Rogers' principle of positive acceptance.

**Curriculum and Learning Method Improvements.** The experience-based curriculum involved parents directly in learning projects. This approach aligns with John Dewey's (1938) concept, which emphasizes real-world engagement in learning.

**Strengthening the Role of Parents and Teachers.** Teachers provided guidelines and brief training sessions to help parents support their children's education. This approach aligns with Carl Rogers' theory of equality in interpersonal relationships.

**Effective Communication Strategies.** Utilizing technology such as WhatsApp and video-based learning as primary communication tools. This strategy supports DeVito's (2011) theory, which highlights the importance of adapting communication tools.

**Recommendations for Improvement:** Schools should provide guidelines for parents on using digital communication tools. Ongoing training sessions should be offered based on parents' needs. Parenting programs should be expanded with interactive activities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on Interpersonal Communication between Teachers and Parents in Experience-Based Education at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi, effective interpersonal communication between teachers and parents plays a crucial role in supporting experience-based learning. The conclusions of this study are structured around three main research questions.



**Interpersonal Communication Between Teachers and Parents in Experience-Based Education.** Interpersonal communication between teachers and parents at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi involves several key aspects, including openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positive attitudes, equality, authenticity, and unconditional acceptance. Teachers employ various communication strategies, including face-to-face interactions and digital media such as WhatsApp, to create more inclusive communication. Teachers and parents with strong communication exhibit higher engagement in supporting students' learning. However, there is variation in the implementation of openness and empathy, as some parents feel that communication with teachers is not yet fully optimal.

**Barriers to Interpersonal Communication Between Teachers and Parents.** Several challenges hinder effective communication between teachers and parents, which can be categorized into two main factors:

**Communication Barriers** include parents' reluctance to communicate with teachers, parents' busy schedules limiting their involvement in school activities, and difficulty understanding technical or complex information provided by teachers.

**Environmental and Infrastructural Constraints.** Limited access to technology. Geographical distance between home and school. Lack of coordination in information delivery.

These barriers highlight the need for more flexible and accessible communication strategies to accommodate all parents.

**Interpersonal Communication Strategies Between Teachers and Parents in Experience-Based Education.** To overcome communication barriers and enhance the effectiveness of teacher-parent interactions, several strategies have been developed, including:

- a. Utilization of Digital Technology: Teachers use WhatsApp as the primary communication tool to share information and document student progress.
- b. Regular Teacher-Parent Meetings, Organizing periodic meetings to strengthen parental involvement in their children's education.
- c. Empowering Parents and Teachers, Implementing parenting programs to enhance parents' understanding of experience-based education, recognizing and appreciating parents' active participation in school activities, and conducting brief training sessions to help parents better support their children's learning.
- d. Active Collaboration Between Teachers and Parents, Encouraging parents to actively engage in experience-based learning activities both at school and at home.
- e. Enhancing Interpersonal Communication Strategies, Improving teacher responsiveness to parental inquiries, simplifying information delivery for easier understanding, and providing flexibility in communication methods to accommodate diverse parental needs.

Overall, this study confirms that strong interpersonal communication between teachers and parents enhances parental engagement in children's education and supports the effectiveness of experience-based learning. However, further optimization of communication strategies is required to ensure that all parents, including those with time and access constraints, remain actively involved.

**Implications and Recommendations.** The study found that experience-based education at SD Taman Harapan Bekasi has been implemented across various subjects but is not yet fully optimized. Several key factors affecting its effectiveness include:

- Teachers have limited time to guide students directly.
- Lack of supporting facilities for experience-based learning.
- Varying levels of parental involvement, where some parents actively participate in their children's education, while others face constraints such as work commitments, lack of

understanding of experience-based learning concepts, or difficulty accessing school communication platforms.

Thus, inclusive communication strategies and resources to support parents in facilitating experience-based learning at home are needed. Additionally, a more flexible approach should be adopted to accommodate the diverse conditions faced by both parents and teachers. This will ensure a more equitable implementation of experience-based education and a greater impact on students' development.

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