

Research Article

# Exploring the Digital Communication Strategies of a School Principal in School Management

Rostina

Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

\* Corresponding Author: [rostina@unm.ac.id](mailto:rostina@unm.ac.id)

**Abstract:** The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed communication practices in educational settings, particularly in school leadership. This study aims to examine how a school principal utilizes digital communication in managing school activities, focusing on the types of media used, communication strategies, and challenges encountered. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, documentation involving school principal as the main participant. The findings reveal that the principal employs multiple digital communication platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, to support both internal and external communication. WhatsApp is primarily used for communication with teachers and parents, while Facebook and Instagram function as channels for disseminating information to the broader community. In terms of communication strategies, the principal emphasizes clarity, conciseness, and appropriate timing, as well as encourages two-way communication to ensure message comprehension. Despite these advantages, several challenges were identified, including limited internet access, delayed responses from staff, varying levels of digital competence, miscommunication due to technical issues, and information overload. To address these issues, the principal adopts adaptive strategies such as simplifying messages, prioritizing essential information, and supporting teachers in improving their digital skills. This study highlights that while digital communication enhances efficiency and accessibility in school management, it also requires strategic implementation to overcome emerging challenges. The findings contribute to a better understanding of digital communication practices in school leadership and offer practical insights for improving communication effectiveness in educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Communication Strategies; Digital Communication; Digital Competence; Educational Management; School Leadership.

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## 1. Introduction

The digital era has brought fundamental changes to various aspects of human life, including the field of education. Digital transformation not only influences teaching and learning processes in the classroom but also significantly alters how schools are managed and communicated. Amidst an increasingly complex and dynamic educational landscape, the school principal, as the primary leader of the educational institution is required to adapt to the rapid developments in communication technology. Digital communication has become an inseparable element of a principal's daily routine, reshaping patterns of interaction with teachers, staff, parents, and other stakeholders.

Research on the digital communication of school principals has become increasingly relevant, given the central role of communication in effective school management. As highlighted by Ambon, Alias, and Mansor (2025), effective communication is one of the key leadership competencies required for principals to fulfill their managerial responsibilities. The systematic study conducted by these three researchers identified that communication competence occupies a crucial position alongside strategic vision, sound decision making, team collaboration, and the ability to adapt to the continuously changing dynamics of

education. This finding affirms that communication skills are not merely an additional asset but an essential foundation for the success of school leadership.

In the current digital context, communication is no longer confined to face-to-face meetings, bulletin boards, or printed circulars as was common in past school management practices. Wasserman, Levi, and Mor (2025) highlight the use of WhatsApp as a key digital communication tool facilitating interaction between administrative teams and educational staff in school operations. This change carries dual consequences, on one hand, digital tools offer unprecedented accessibility and speed, on the other, they demand an adjustment in communication styles and the establishment of clear policies to ensure optimal professional interactions.

The phenomenon of deep mediatization within the school context provides an important framework for understanding this transformation. Dehmel and Meister (2025) draw on Hepp's concept of "deep mediatization" to explain how digital media reshape social practices in schools. This concept explains how media changes shape social practices and culture in schools. According to this perspective, digital communication is not a neutral technical tool, but an active force that reshapes social relations, expectations, and the norms governing interactions among school actors. The principal, therefore, not only uses communication technology but also engages in an ongoing negotiation regarding how this technology should be used and what it signifies for their professional lives.

The development of digital communication technology has fundamentally altered the paradigm of school management. Tulowitzki, Gerick, and Eickelmann (2022) showed that digital communication facilitates more accessible and efficient interaction between school leaders and stakeholders. This ease of access brings benefits in the form of greater transparency and increased participation from various parties in school activities. Parents, for instance, can now obtain information about school activities in real time, while teachers can coordinate more efficiently regarding various aspects of learning and administration.

However, this paradigm shift also introduces significant challenges. Heffernan and Selwyn (2023) identified that the demands for principal availability and accessibility tend to increase significantly in the digital age. Krein (2024) highlights that digital technologies shape leadership practices by promoting continuous connectivity, which may extend work activities and contribute to less clearly defined boundaries between professional responsibilities and other aspects of life. Heffernan and Selwyn (2023) also found that principals frequently check emails throughout the day due to expectations of rapid responses, resulting in the extension of work into personal time and blurring the boundaries between professional and private life. The negative consequences for principals' personal lives and well-being have become a serious concern in contemporary educational leadership literature.

The phenomenon of heightened expectations for rapid responses is another defining characteristic of digital communication in schools. Waxman et al. (2013) argued that digital communication creates expectations for immediate responses, placing additional pressure on school principals and blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. This creates additional pressure and workload for principals in their daily duties. (Toker Gokce & Balci, 2023) found that communication through instant messaging applications, particularly those using personal devices, conspicuously shifts the boundary between work and personal communication, creating challenging working conditions.

This change also affects the quality of professional relationships within the school environment. The quality of interpersonal relationships between principals and teachers forms the foundation of an educational institution's success. Positive relationships do not develop spontaneously, they require continuous investment with open and direct communication as a necessary condition. In the digital context, building and maintaining such relationships becomes more complex due to various inherent barriers in technology-mediated communication. Building on these considerations, it becomes essential to examine more specifically how principals engage with digital communication in their everyday professional practices. In particular, attention needs to be directed toward the types of digital media utilized, the strategies employed in managing communication, and the challenges encountered in maintaining effective interactions within the school environment.

Overall, these points show that digital communication in school leadership is not only about using technology, but also about how it is managed and the challenges that come with it. Many previous studies have explained how digital communication is increasingly used in schools. However, there is still limited understanding of how it is actually used in daily practice and how principals deal with their roles in digital communication. Therefore, this study aims to explore the digital communication practices of a school principal by focusing on three main

aspects: (1) the types of digital communication media used, (2) the communication strategies applied in interacting with school stakeholders, and (3) the challenges faced in the communication process. By studying these aspects, this research hopes to provide a clearer understanding of how digital communication influences school leadership in today's educational environment.

## 2. Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was suitable because it helped the researcher understand a phenomenon in depth within its real context. According to Robert K. Yin (2017), a case study is appropriate when the researcher wants to explore a contemporary issue in detail. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how a school principal uses digital communication in managing the school. The participant of this study was one school principal. The participant was selected using purposive sampling. The researcher chose someone who had experience and knowledge related to the research topic. In this case, the principal was chosen because they actively used digital communication in school management (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research was conducted at Sekolah Cendekia Berseri, Makassar, South Sulawesi where the principal used digital communication tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram in daily school activities. The setting was important because it provides a real context for understanding how digital communication was applied in school leadership. The data in this study were collected using three techniques:

- 1) In-depth Interview  
The researcher conducted interviews with the school principal to understand their experiences, strategies, and challenges in using digital communication.
- 2) Observation  
The researcher observed how digital communication was used in daily school management, including interactions between the principal and teachers.
- 3) Documentation  
The researcher collected documents such, WhatsApp group communication, Official school announcements in Facebook and Instagram, and other digital communication platforms used by the school.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). This process helps the researcher to analyze the data in a clear and systematic way. This model includes three steps:

- a. Data Reduction  
The researcher selects and simplifies the data to focus on important information.
- b. Data Display  
The data are organized into tables or descriptions to make them easier to understand.
- c. Conclusion Drawing  
The researcher interprets the data and draws conclusions based on the findings.

## 3. Result/Findings

### Digital Communication Media

This section presents the findings related to the digital communication media used by the school principal in managing school activities. The data were obtained from an in-depth interview and focus on several aspects, including the types of media used, reasons for choosing the media, frequency of use, effectiveness, accessibility, and strategies to ensure effective communication.

The findings showed that the principal used three main digital communication platforms, namely WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. Each platform had a different role in supporting school communication. WhatsApp was mainly used for internal communication, especially for communicating with teachers and parents. Meanwhile, Facebook and Instagram were used for external purposes, such as promoting school activities and sharing information with the wider community. This indicates that the principal selected communication media based on their specific functions and target audiences.

The principal explained that WhatsApp was chosen because it made communication easier and faster. It allowed direct interaction and quick responses which are important in daily school management. In contrast, Instagram and Facebook were mainly used to promote the school and provide information to the public. These platforms helped increase the

visibility of the school and allowed information to reach a broader audience. The findings also showed that all of these platforms were used every day, which suggests that digital communication has become an essential part of the principal's daily work.

In terms of communication practice, the principal stated that there was a difference between formal and informal communication. Although the same platforms were used, the way messages were delivered depended on the situation. Formal communication usually involved instructions or important information, while informal communication was more flexible, such as reminders or daily coordination. Among the three platforms, WhatsApp was considered the most effective communication tool because it was easy to use and allowed fast responses from teachers and parents.

The findings also revealed that all teachers and staff were able to access these communication platforms without significant difficulties. This shows that accessibility was not a major issue in this context. However, the principal still needed to ensure that information was clearly received by all staff members. To address this, the principal checked whether the messages sent through digital platforms had been read and then reminded staff again during daily morning briefings before starting school activities. This step was important to confirm that the information was understood and that the instructions could be properly implemented.

In addition, the principal sometimes used more than one platform to deliver the same information. This was done to make sure that the message could reach all stakeholders and reduce the possibility of missed information. Using multiple platforms helped strengthen communication and ensured that important information was not overlooked. Overall, these findings suggest that digital communication in school leadership is not only about using technology, but also about managing communication effectively through appropriate media selection and strategies.

These findings are consistent with previous study which highlights that digital technologies have increasingly become integral to educational practices, influencing school administration, leadership, and learning processes (Karakose et al., 2024). Digital technologies have become an important part of everyday practices in education, including communication and management processes. Therefore, the use of multiple digital platforms, as found in this study, reflects broader changes in how school leadership is practiced in the digital era.

### **Communication Strategies**

This section presents the findings related to the communication strategies used by the school principal in delivering information through digital media. The data were obtained from an in-depth interview and focus on how messages are delivered, understood, and responded to by teachers and staff. The findings showed that the principal used several digital methods to communicate with teachers and staff, such as Zoom meetings, WhatsApp group chats, and personal WhatsApp messages. These different channels were used depending on the situation and the type of information. For example, Zoom was used for more formal meetings, while WhatsApp was used for daily communication and quick coordination. This shows that the principal selected communication strategies based on flexibility and practicality.

In delivering messages, the principal emphasized that communication should be simple, short, and clear. The principal avoided long and complicated explanations to make sure that teachers could easily understand the information. This strategy helped reduce confusion and made communication more efficient. After sending messages, the principal also asked teachers to repeat or restate the information they received. This was done to ensure that the message was clearly understood and correctly interpreted. The findings also revealed that timing was an important part of communication strategy. The principal usually shared information during break time so that teachers could read the messages without interrupting their teaching activities. In addition, the principal adjusted communication style based on the situation. For example, instead of giving direct orders, the principal sometimes used inviting words such as "let's" to create a more positive and supportive atmosphere.

To build two-way communication, the principal tried to be a good listener and maintained close relationships with teachers. The principal also provided solutions when teachers faced problems. One important strategy to increase participation was organizing a monthly sharing session where all teachers were required to express their opinions or concerns. This activity helped create open communication and encouraged teachers to be more active. In dealing with miscommunication, the principal explained the information again in more detail and made sure that the message was correctly understood. This step was

important to avoid misunderstanding and ensure that all instructions were implemented properly.

These findings are in line with previous studies which show that effective school leadership involves building collaboration and maintaining active interaction with teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). In addition, the use of digital tools in educational leadership can support communication and coordination when applied appropriately. Therefore, the strategies used by the principal in this study reflect the importance of interactive and adaptive communication in the digital era.

### **Communication Challenges**

This section presents the findings related to the challenges faced by the school principal in implementing digital communication in school management. The data were obtained from an in-depth interview and focus on several issues, such as internet access, response from teachers, differences in digital skills, misunderstanding in communication, information overload, and strategies to deal with these challenges.

The findings showed that one of the main challenges in digital communication was related to internet access. The principal stated that not all teachers had stable internet connections, and some of them depended only on the school's Wi-Fi. In some cases, the Wi-Fi connection was also unstable which affected the communication process. This condition sometimes caused delays in receiving or responding to messages. This finding indicates that technical infrastructure still plays an important role in supporting effective digital communication in schools. Another challenge was related to the response speed of teachers and staff. The principal explained that not all teachers responded quickly to digital messages. This situation could slow down communication and coordination, especially when the information was urgent. To address this issue, the principal considered the timing of sending messages. Messages were usually delivered outside busy hours, such as during break time, to increase the possibility of getting responses. This shows that managing communication timing is an important strategy in digital communication.

In addition, differences in digital skills among teachers also became a challenge. The principal stated that not all teachers had the same level of digital competence. To overcome this issue, the principal provided explanations and guidance so that all teachers could improve their digital skills. The principal emphasized that in the current era, all teachers are expected to understand and use digital applications to support communication with colleagues and parents. This reflects the need for continuous support and adaptation in using digital technology in schools. Misunderstanding in digital communication was also reported in this study.

The principal shared an example during an online meeting using Zoom, where one teacher experienced poor internet connection. As a result, the teacher did not receive the information completely which led to misunderstanding. This shows that technical problems can directly affect the clarity of communication and may lead to confusion among staff. Another challenge identified in this study was related to information overload. The principal explained that too many messages could reduce the effectiveness of communication, especially when the information was long and not clear. In addition, the principal mentioned that some teachers had low interest in reading long messages. To address this issue, the principal selected the most important information to be delivered first and ensured that messages were concise and not too complicated. This strategy helped improve the clarity and effectiveness of communication.

Overall, the findings showed that the biggest challenges in digital communication were related to internet connection and the low engagement of some teachers in reading messages. To overcome these challenges, the principal used several strategies, such as simplifying information, choosing the right time to send messages, and providing support to improve teachers' digital skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies which highlight that digital communication can create challenges such as technical barriers and communication overload, especially when not managed properly (Gui & Büchi, 2019). Furthermore, research by Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2018) shows that differences in digital skills can affect how individuals access and use digital communication, which may influence the effectiveness of communication in organizations, including schools. In conclusion, digital communication offers many benefits for school management, but it also presents several challenges that need to be managed carefully. The principal in this study showed awareness of these challenges and applied practical strategies to ensure that communication remained effective.

## Discussion

The findings of this study show that digital communication plays a very important role in school management today. Based on the interview, the principal stated that digital communication is very important for teachers, parents, and students because it allows communication to happen more easily without face-to-face meetings. This means that communication has become more flexible and efficient. Teachers and parents can discuss students' development online, and information can be shared quickly. This finding is supported by Selwyn (2016) who explains that digital technology has become an important part of everyday communication practices in education, changing how people interact and exchange information.

The results also show that the principal uses several digital platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, for different purposes. WhatsApp is mainly used for internal communication, while Facebook and Instagram are used for sharing information with the public. This indicates that the principal understands how to use digital media based on communication needs. The ability to choose the right platform is important for effective communication. This finding is in line with Redecker (2017) who states that educators need digital competence to use technology effectively, including selecting appropriate tools for communication.

However, the findings also reveal several challenges in using digital communication. One of the main problems is the unstable internet connection. Some teachers depend on the school's Wi-Fi, which is sometimes not reliable. This can delay communication and affect the delivery of information. In addition, not all teachers respond quickly to messages, which can slow down coordination. These issues show that access to technology is still an important factor in digital communication.

Another challenge found in this study is the difference in digital skills among teachers. Some teachers are not familiar with digital tools, so they need guidance and support. The principal tries to solve this problem by giving explanations and helping teachers improve their digital skills. This is important because digital communication requires not only access but also the ability to use technology effectively. Furthermore, misunderstanding can also happen in digital communication. For example, during a Zoom meeting, a teacher could not fully understand the information due to poor internet connection. This shows that technical problems can affect the clarity of communication.

The study also highlights the issue of information overload. The principal explained that too many messages can make teachers less interested in reading the information, especially when the messages are too long. To solve this problem, the principal simplifies the messages and focuses on important information. Timing is also considered important, as messages are usually sent during break time to increase the chance of getting responses. These strategies show that managing communication is as important as using technology.

In addition, the principal has positive expectations for the future of digital communication. The principal hopes that digital communication will continue to develop and become more effective in supporting school activities. Digital communication is expected to make it easier to share information and improve collaboration between teachers and parents. This shows that digital communication is not only a tool but also an important part of school management.

In conclusion, this study shows that digital communication has both benefits and challenges. It helps improve communication efficiency and accessibility, but it also creates problems related to technology, skills, and message management. Therefore, school principals need to use appropriate strategies to manage digital communication effectively. This includes choosing the right platform, simplifying messages, supporting teachers' digital skills, and ensuring that information is clearly understood.

## 4. Conclusion

This study explored how a school principal uses digital communication in managing school activities, focusing on the media used, the strategies applied, and the challenges faced. The findings clearly show that digital communication is now an important part of everyday school management. The principal uses several platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, for different purposes. WhatsApp is mostly used for daily communication with teachers and parents, while Facebook and Instagram are used to share information with the public. This shows that the principal understands how to use different platforms depending on the needs and audience.

In terms of communication strategies, the principal prefers to deliver messages in a simple and clear way so they are easy to understand. The principal also pays attention to timing and tries to create two-way communication with teachers. For example, teachers are sometimes asked to repeat the information to make sure there is no misunderstanding. These strategies help communication run more smoothly. However, the study also found several challenges. Problems with internet connection, slow responses from some teachers, and different levels of digital skills can affect communication.

In addition, too many messages can make people less interested in reading the information, especially if the message is too long. Misunderstandings can also happen, especially when there are technical issues during online meetings. To deal with these challenges, the principal takes some practical steps, such as sending shorter messages, choosing the right time to communicate, and helping teachers improve their digital skills. These efforts show that managing communication is just as important as using digital tools.

Overall, digital communication provides many advantages, such as making communication faster and easier. However, it also brings some challenges that need attention. Because of this, school principals need to be flexible and thoughtful in using digital communication so that it can work effectively for everyone. In the future, it would be useful for other studies to involve more schools and participants to get a wider picture of digital communication in education. Schools are also encouraged to improve internet access and provide training so that all teachers can use digital tools more confidently.

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