

TEACHER GROUP COMMUNICATION CREATIVITY FOR KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL PROMOTION IN THE INTEREST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC Case Study at Asri Kindergarten School in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district East Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

In some private schools, especially those experiencing problems with a decline in the number of students, teachers are often assigned to the promotion team, regardless of their educational background or promotion experience. This case was also experienced by Asri Kindergarten school in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta, even though this kindergarten is well known, and accredited, accessible with sufficient facilities. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study method. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted for data gathering. The results show 1) the ideas and forms of creativity in teacher group communication carried out are personal, flexible, relaxed, and do not seriously focus on issues about how to promote schools, and 2) the challenges in teacher group communication regarding creativity are Principals and teachers are both not creative, not routine, and not serious in communicating for promotion purposes. The novelty of this research is that not all teachers can be motivated to learn social media, even in conditions of need for promotional purposes. Creativity does not appear immediately, even if it is forced or forced. Thus, creative teachers need a learning process, and must be willing to accept the principal's instructions, not pessimistic, serious, and focused, but not always relying on the principal.

Keywords: *creativity, group communication, promotion, covid 19 pandemic*

INTRODUCTION

In some private schools, especially those experiencing problems with a decline in the number of students, teachers are often involved and even assigned to the promotion team, even though they have no educational background or promotion experience. This fact has also been revealed in the research of Aniyawati (2020, p.322), Labaso (2018, p.302), and Riyanto (2017, p.60). In the three studies, it was explained that teachers also play an active role as school promotion teams, both at the Kindergarten (TK), Madrasah Aliyah (MA), and Elementary (SD) levels. In most

cases, teachers of private schools are often involved as a school promotion team. The task of school promotion to find new students is one of the burdens that must be overcome by teachers, even if they do not have any background, knowledge, and experience of promotion, because they graduate from teacher schools, such as IKIP or PGSD.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, this case has become even worse because many schools have reduced the number of teachers. The occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced the Indonesian government to take a policy in the form of imposing restrictions on community social activities, which has caused economic activity to drastically decrease, people's purchasing power has decreased, and unemployment has increased so that it has an impact on the ability of parents to continue their children's studies. The same thing was experienced by Asri Kindergarten in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta which experienced a significant decrease in the number of students during the Covid-19 pandemic. This Asri Kindergarten, which was established in 1998, is a Kindergarten with A Accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs.

Besides being well known, having many achievements, having complete facilities, being in a residential area, and being accessible by two or four-wheeled vehicles, it also has a comfortable, clean, and safe environment. The learning system used is also unique, that is, it elaborates on two learning methods, the natural school method and the Montessori method. Of course, it takes good communication skills from Asri's kindergarten teacher in explaining to parents the importance of kindergarten education for children before entering elementary school, so that parents are still interested in sending their children to kindergarten. For example, by providing information about the learning system at Asri Kindergarten, which elaborates on two learning methods, which include the natural school method and the Montessori method.

In addition, it is also about the role of the Asri Kindergarten teachers who help children to be able to read, write, and count, as a condition for entering elementary school. All parties are involved in it because it requires continuous improvement efforts. Education carried out in early childhood is essentially an effort to facilitate the development of children as a whole, or emphasize the development of all aspects of the child's personality and character, namely moral character and performance character. Early childhood development is an increase in children's awareness and ability to know themselves and interact with their environment, along with the physical growth they experience.

Education for early childhood is important to assist the child's development process in handling obstacles. Thus, during the development period, it is necessary to interact with the environment. Learning carried out in early childhood will also develop the full potential of children including physical, starting from weight and height gain, brain development, to fine and gross motor skills. Along with physical development, ideally, the child will have more harmonious body movements. According to Dahari and Ya, many things are considered for parents in educating their children, especially at the kindergarten level, where there are two biggest considerations for parents, namely regarding the benefits and achievements that children can get in the future,

Other factors that influence parental considerations are the use of the language of instruction in the teaching and learning process, student safety during school, and information technology used by schools. Plus, around the Asri Kindergarten area, there are already many kindergartens that have been established. According to Solso, Maclin, and Maclin, creativity is a cognitive activity that produces a new view of a problem and is not limited to pragmatic results. Meanwhile, according to Drevdahl in Hurlock, creativity is a person's ability to produce compositions, products, or ideas that are new, and previously unknown to the maker.

Creativity can be in the form of imaginative activities or synthesis of thoughts whose results are not only summaries and can also include the formation of new patterns and the combination of information obtained from previous experiences and the grafting of old relationships into new situations which also includes the formation of new correlations. Creativity has a defined purpose or purpose, not mere fantasy. In addition, creativity can also form artistic, literary, and scientific products, both procedural and methodological. As known, in today's digital era, creativity is one of the important soft skills required.

Including the kindergarten schools promotion, as revealed in Sir John Daniel's research, that in the digital era, something new, innovative, and solutive is required so that consumers get more value than other kindergarten schools. So without creativity, the promotion will not develop and provide the results of getting new students as expected by the schools. The rapid growth in the number of schools certainly brings the impact of intense competition. Another effect is the speed of competitors in adapting and improvising, not only on the facilities and technology used in the teaching and learning process but also on the model or promotion strategy.

METHODOLOGY

A case study is one of the research methods of social sciences (Yin, 2015, p.1), and is preferred to track contemporary events (p.1). According to Yin (p.7), there are 3 types of objectives at once referred to as strategies in Case Study Research, namely exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Each of these strategies has different types of questions, although the differences are not visible, it is even acknowledged that they tend to overlap (p.13).

However, according to Yin (p.13), the question of "how" or "why" can be used for contemporary research, and if the researcher has little or no opportunity to control the event. Such is the case with this research. That is why this research uses the Case Study method because it wants to describe teacher interpersonal relationships and the creativity of teacher group communication for the sake of promoting kindergarten schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, I want to explore and explain the "what", "how", and "why" of the creativity of teacher group communication for the sake of promoting Asri Kindergarten during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The type of research in this study is qualitative. According to Denzin (2011, p.6), qualitative research emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality, the close relationship between the researcher and the subject being studied, and the pressures of the situation that shape the investigation. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that highlight how

social experiences arise as well as the acquisition of meaning.

The research subjects or informants are teachers and school principals of Asri Kindergarten in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta. They were chosen because they are the main characters in teacher group communication for the sake of promoting the Asri Kindergarten school during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study uses interviews as a technique for obtaining primary data and will be conducted face-to-face. If it is not complete, communication media such as telephone and WhatsApp will be used.

Likewise, this research does the same to obtain supporting data from literature studies (reviews of journals or reputable articles), TK Asri school documentation, document notes on the results of TK Asri school teacher meetings, brochures, and others that are used as secondary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ideas and Creative Forms of Teacher Group Communication for Promotional Interests of Asri Kindergarten Schools in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta During the Covid-19 Pandemic

According to Hymes, the functional theory of group communication is seen as a process and instrument for groups in making decisions, emphasizing the relationship between the quality of communication and the results of the group. Meanwhile, according to Philipsen, group communication is a means to share information and the way group members investigate and identify defects in thinking, is also an act of persuasion.

The facts found otherwise in the communication of the Asri Kindergarten school teacher group in the Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta during the Covid-19 pandemic. First, the communication process as an instrument was not carried out by this group properly. The decision is not discussed jointly but all decisions are determined and taken by the Principal of TK Asri. Things that emphasize the relationship between communication quality and expected outcomes in groups are not in harmony with Hymes' functional theory because all teachers only accept decisions from the Principal. Second, fellow teachers at Asri Kindergarten share information and discuss matters regarding the existence or condition of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, intensive communication between teachers and principals to exchange information does not occur often, because the principal's busy schedule is very busy and hinders the communication process. Third, intensive internal communication needs to be applied by principals and teachers to develop ideas. For example, the Principal holds a small meeting once a week to discuss important matters or short-term and long-term targets to be achieved by the Asri Kindergarten school, and these things have been through mutual agreement. In addition, principals and teachers need to attend training or receive training on marketing and promotion. Even though TK Asri's human resources are very limited, everyone must master marketing techniques. Fourth, there are stark contrasts in the promotion of schools and the teaching and learning system that prevailed at Asri Kindergarten before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, if there were parents of prospective new students, they usually came to visit the school to ask questions directly and usually one of the teachers would accompany the parents to go around

the school and talk about the activities carried out while in the school's environment.

Next is the conceptual basis of this research, the researcher uses the concept of group communication to describe the facts. Group communication is communication in a small group of people to share information, help develop ideas, and even solve problems, both formally and informally. In the Asri Kindergarten teacher group, it is known that the principal and teachers do not often communicate intensively to discuss certain goals or just to share information. The most dominant communication in this group is an instruction from the Principal to the teacher about gathering new students. In addition, the communication that exists between the principal and the teacher is carried out informally or using everyday conversation.

The definition of the group itself according to Saptono & Sulasmono is several people who have the same norms, values, and expectations, who intentionally and regularly interact with each other and who have self-awareness as group members who are recognized by outsiders. Group communication occurs in the context of interpersonal communication and has passed the stages of intrapersonal communication. When intrapersonal communication occurs, all decisions are made by the individual himself after interpreting the meaning received. While in interpersonal communication, the feedback received is influenced by the interpretation of the meaning conveyed by other individuals.

Group communication is considered important because humans in their daily lives meet other humans and provide various responses that are expressed in the form of words and actions. Principals and teachers are interacting with each other by communicating to discuss various things. However, the communication carried out is not only internal, on several occasions, they must also communicate with other parties such as parents of students, residents around the school environment, and other interested parties. This communication is intended to foster good relations with various parties so that the existence of their school can be recognized.

As for group communication, according to Bungin, groups have functions that are used for the benefit of the community, the group itself, and group members which include: the function of social relations, the function of education, the function of persuasion, the function of problem-solving, and the function of therapy. During the pandemic, the school empowered parents of other students to help promote the school by providing them with benefits so that they could attract enthusiasts to attend Kindergarten Asri.

Regarding the marketing communication mix, according to Tjiptono, the marketing communication mix is a set of tools that marketers can use to shape the characteristics of the services offered to customers. The marketing communication mix used by TK Asri during the promotion was digital posters and banners. The group of teachers tried digital posters as a promotional tool which were then distributed on WA Status and various social media. The Asri Kindergarten school also used banners to attract new students widely by placing them in the strategic area so that the community can see and know well about the existence of the school. Concerning the concept of communication creativity, according to Littlejohn and Foss, in the book *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, creativity is the ability to apply new knowledge, skills, and understanding in a certain way that produces new products,

new processes, or new ideas that are relevant to the task at hand. The way to do this is through learning. Creativity is part of innovation, and the way that groups can provide creative and imaginative solutions to a problem is to form groups consisting of intelligent and creative individuals. But such groups do not always produce more creative solutions than other groups with different compositions or than individuals working alone. Some of these factors are associated with individuals who are members of the group, others are associated with the environment or the wider context in which the group is located, and some are associated with the exchange of communication messages.

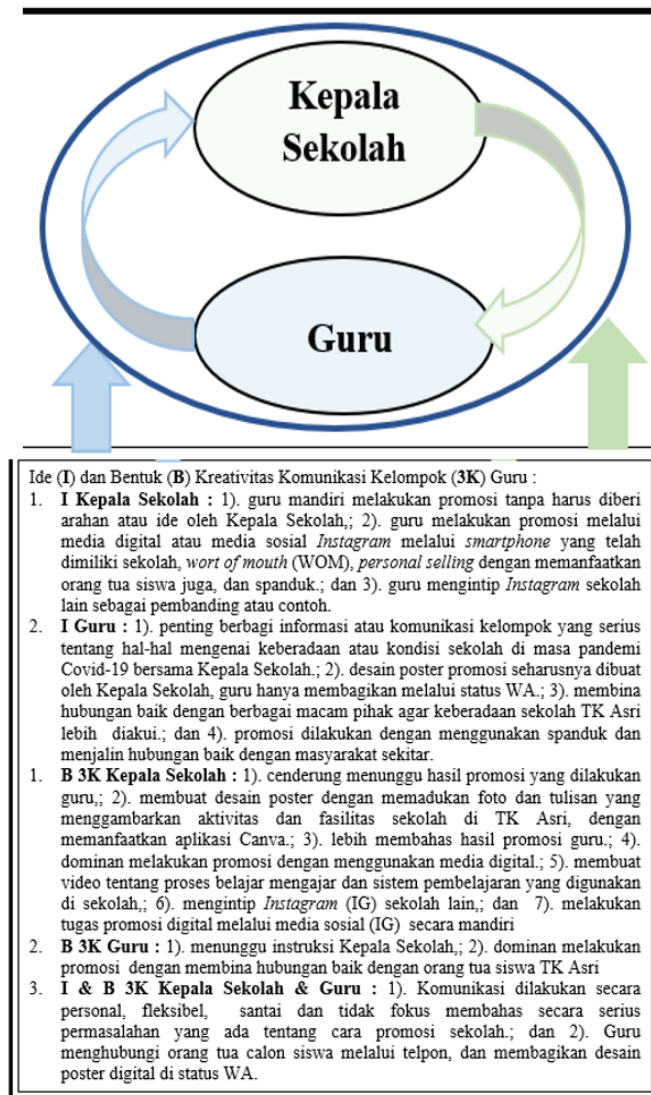


Figure 1: Creative Idea Model Teacher Group Communication for Promotional Interests of Asri Kindergarten School in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period.

Source: Researcher Thought Results (Yamiati, 2021)

The creative communication carried out by the Asri Kindergarten teacher group is the use of Instagram social media in managing information as the latest way to promote. In this case, the principal instructs the teacher to be able to manage in-

formation by utilizing Instagram social media through smartphones that the school has. Principals teach teachers from how to download apps to creating content to share on the school's Instagram homepage. The principal also invites teachers to see other schools' Instagram to know how they share information on social media, this is a comparison or example that can be developed to be included in TK Asri's Instagram.

Barriers to Creativity in Teacher Group Communication for Promotional Interests for Asri Kindergarten Schools in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta During the Covid-19 Pandemic

From the empirical data obtained, it is known that there are several obstacles. According to the principal, teachers lack the awareness to develop themselves both in absorbing new knowledge and doing new or unusual things. According to the principal's perception, there was a defect in the teachers' thinking, which come from themselves, they did not want to improve. As a result, the principal's efforts to invite them to improve their skill were often ignored and even immediately got a firm rejection. Especially when it comes to things that required technology, teachers often delegated the work to the principal and did not want to accept it.

Regarding the role of communication technology and social media, teachers admitted that they could not use it well, because of their lack of understanding of communication technology or social media. Their willingness to learn communication technology or social media was also low because they have more important things to do. In the end, the group produced a variety of alternative proposals to deal with the problem and discussed the goals to be achieved. According to empirical data obtained, it is known that there are several obstacles so that the communication of the Asri Kindergarten teacher group in the Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta during the Covid-19 pandemic, was not in line with Hirokawa's opinion on functional theory.

The group communication that occurred in TK Asri was small group communication because there were only 1 principal and 2 teachers. However, they did not take the school promotion matters seriously. It was only a few times that the principal and teachers collaborated in making learning videos that aim to inform the public about the learning quality and learning media used by TK Asri schools.

This effort did not last long due to the principal's busy activities, while teachers did not continue making the video, arguing that they did not understand how, and did not want to interfere with the principal's activities. In this case, Asri Kindergarten's teacher group communication had once again not produced alternative proposals to deal with the problem of promotion to find new students, and there was no discussion about the goals to be achieved together. Whereas according to Munandar, creativity is the ability to provide new ideas and apply them in problem-solving or the ability to see new relationships with pre-existing elements based on information, data, or experiences that have been obtained by a person during his life. According to Santrock,

If you look at the known empirical data, it can be understood that both the principal and the teacher had creative barriers, they has obstacles in providing new ideas and applying them in problem-solving. In addition, they also had barriers to thinking about new ways of finding unique solutions to the problem. According to Saptono

& Sulasmono, in group communication, there are a number of people who have the same norms, values, and expectations, who intentionally and regularly interact with each other, and have self-awareness as group members who are recognized by outsiders. In addition, in small group communication, interpersonal communication also occurs, which has passed the stage of intrapersonal communication.

So that means, when intrapersonal communication occurs, all decisions are made by the individual himself after interpreting the meaning received. While in interpersonal communication, the feedback received is influenced by the interpretation of the meaning conveyed by other individuals. However, group communication is important in human life, because groups are an inseparable part of daily activities. The method chosen is casual, not serious, in a small talk setting.

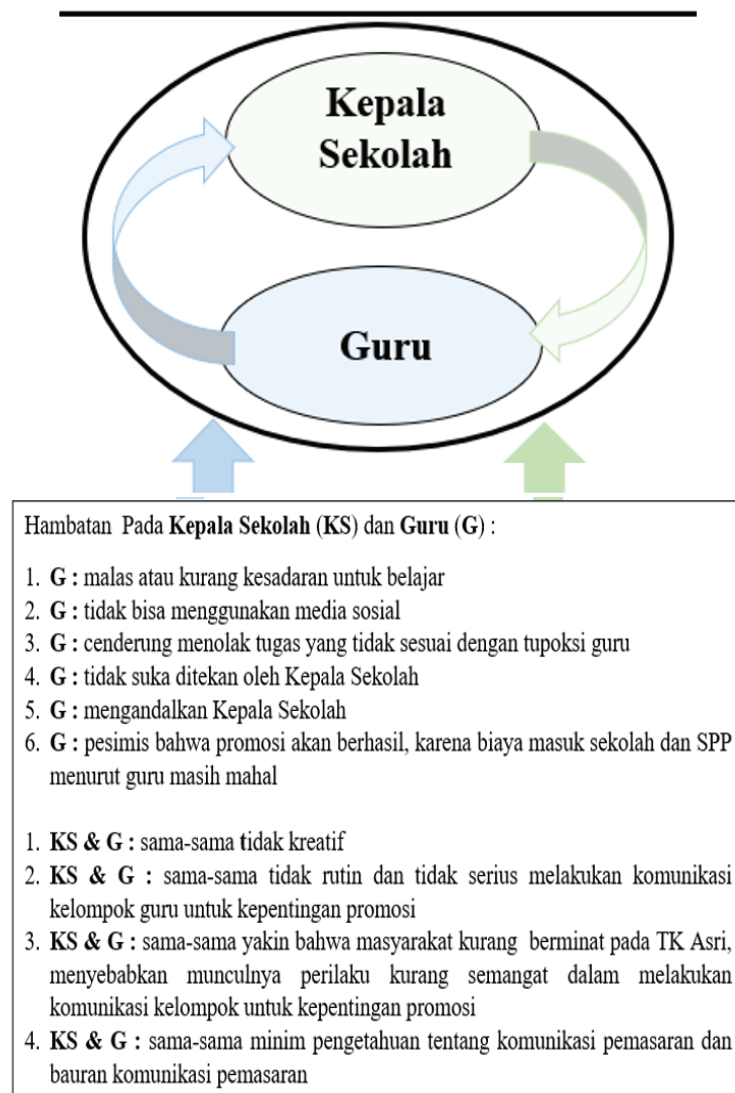


Figure 2: Model of Barriers to Creativity Teacher Group Communication for Promotional Interests of Asri Kindergarten School in Halim Perdana Kusuma Sub-district, East Jakarta During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period.

Source: Researcher Thought Results (Yamiati, 2021)

According to Pace and Faules, organizational communication is defined as the presentation and interpretation of messages between communication units that are

part of an organization. Even though there are many important things to think about in terms of school promotion interests. Such as the product, price, place or location of promotion, promotion method, personnel assigned to carry out the promotion, as well as school physical equipment that will be used for school promotion purposes, and the promotion process or stages that will be carried out. According to Philip Kotler, when discussing promotional efforts, also means discussing the elements of the marketing communication mix, such as product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process, known by the abbreviation 7P.

So all this time, the promotions tools are known by the principal and teachers through making banners, flyers, social media Instagram, and mobile marketing using student shuttle cars only. Regarding the price, although Asri Kindergarten gave a discount, compared to the entrance fee for other Kindergartens around Asri Kindergarten, the entrance fee for Asri Kindergarten was still expensive. When using this concept, there are several more obstacles that can be understood. One, in carrying out promotions, the Asri Kindergarten teacher group was lacking the knowledge to identify their target market because they did not understand the characteristics of the community around the school.

All promotion objectives had been carried out by the teacher group, but it was considered to be less effective because the promotion process carried out was quite short. When conveying information, the style used is considered quite interactive, by inviting parents and children to go around the school showing the facilities and learning media used. The communication mix used by teachers in conducting promotions was personal communication.

CONCLUSION

The principal and teacher had their own ideas for school promotion, but not all were accepted and agreed upon by each other. This means, there is a gap in group communication creativity between the principal and teachers, due to differences in the ideas of group communication creativity. In addition, even though the Principal was the leader and owner of the Asri Kindergarten school, it does not mean that all ideas for group communication creativity by the Principal can be accepted or agreed upon by the teachers.

Accordingly, in every teacher communication group, there must be some form of ideas rejection, both from teachers and the principal. In addition, they also had minimal knowledge of marketing communication and marketing communication mix. The novelty that is known from this research is that not all teachers can be motivated to learn social media, even in an urge to promote the school to find new students. That means, creativity does not appear immediately, even if it is forced.

Even though teachers are supposed to be creative in group communication with students and good at educating their students to be creative, they are not necessarily creative in communicating with groups of teachers or raising problems with their work, even with their principal. For teachers to be creative in teacher group communication, other than the need to learn, they must also be willing to accept the Principal's instructions, not pessimistic, serious, focused, and not rely on the Principal alone in finding ideas for problems and solutions being faced.

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