

# PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCES OF THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLE OF PRINCIPAL IN INTEGRATED SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

*This phenomenological study explored teachers' experiences in terms of the interpersonal communication styles of their principals in different contexts, specifically in terms of work-related matters, personal matters, and the interaction of principals with other teachers in integrated schools. The study used in-depth interviews with ten teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in integrated schools in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, Philippines. The findings revealed the importance of developing an interpersonal communication style that fosters mutual respect, collaboration, and consideration for others' needs and feelings. Principals should prioritize clear and effective communication, active supervision, and fair treatment in work-related matters while establishing authority, promoting inclusivity, and encouraging collaboration. In personal matters, principals should balance kindness and authority, maintain open and direct communication, establish boundaries, and foster positive relationships and trust. Interactions with teachers should be friendly, approachable, and fair while handling conflicts constructively and eliminating faction systems among the teachers in the integrated school. The study also addresses weaknesses, including principals' tendency to withdraw during crises, suggesting that training or seminars in conflict management skills can mitigate this issue. Ultimately, this research highlights the significance of effective interpersonal communication skills in school leadership and offers practical guidance for improving interpersonal communication styles, contributing to a positive and productive work environment in integrated schools.*

**Keywords:** - *Interpersonal communication style of principal, teacher's views, expectations, experiences, recommendations, integrated school, phenomenological research.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication style includes the way individuals convey information to others through verbal and nonverbal behavior, tone, and contextual factors. Interpersonal communication is essential as it fosters mutual understanding between superiors and subordinate employees, leading to enhanced coordination of various activities and tasks (Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008). According to Suntani, Sasongko, Kristiawan, Walid, and Kusumah (2021), inadequate interpersonal communication can complicate joint activities and contribute to stress and employee dissatisfaction.

Bateman and Zeithaml (1990), cited in the study of Dwyer and Hopwood (2019), identified six interpersonal communication styles in a work environment: controlling; egalitarian; structuring; dynamic; relinquishing; and withdrawal. In addition, Okotoni and Akinwale, 2019 revealed four communication styles principals use: open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style, and assertive communication. Thus, understanding interpersonal communication and using appropriate communication styles for effective communication creates a harmonious relationship between administrators and teachers, motivating teachers to exert maximum effort. In contrast, poor communication can harm teachers' mental and physical well-being (Kambeya, 2008).

In a study conducted at the Northeast Georgia schools in the USA 2008. The findings revealed that teachers prefer face-to-face communication with their administrators. Principals' attitudes, convictions, and methods also affect teachers' performance. Anger, low self-esteem, feelings of ineptitude, and job searching are just a few unpleasant mental and physical states that can result from poor interpersonal connection with the principal. (Kambeya, 2008).

In the Philippines, a study revealed that most school administrators communicated assertively. Effectively dealing with subordinates, providing facts to back up ideas and viewpoints, and appropriately expressing emotions are all part of this communication style. Teachers are more likely to be content and fulfilled because it promotes a climate of trust, friendliness, and loyalty amongst school administrators and personnel. However, aggressive principals may need to attend seminars to learn better communication styles. (Shalle et al., 2018).

In Olaycon Integrated School, effective communication with teachers is crucial as the school comprises three departments: elementary, junior high, and senior high school. The researcher is an experienced teacher in an integrated school for five years; the researcher observed that using certain interpersonal communication styles in various situations can affect the message's meaning, which can either build rapport or create division among the teachers.

This study aimed to explore the teacher's views, expectations, experiences, and recommendations about the interpersonal communication styles of principals in different contexts, specifically in terms of work-related matters, personal matters, and the interaction of principals with other teachers in integrated schools. Conducting this study on the interpersonal communication styles of principals based on the teachers' views, expectations, and experiences could help educational administrators determine the communication styles suited to different situations and teachers.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

1. How do teachers describe their school principal's interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and interaction with other teachers in integrated schools?
2. What are teachers' expectations regarding their school principal's interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and interaction with other teachers in integrated schools?
3. What are teachers' experiences regarding the interpersonal communication styles of their principals regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and interaction with other teachers in integrated schools?
4. What are teachers' recommendations regarding the principals' interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and interaction with other teachers in integrated schools?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach, which aimed to explore the teachers' views, expectations, experiences, and recommendations regarding the interpersonal communication styles of principals in different contexts, specifically in terms of work-related matters, personal matters, and the interaction of principals with other teachers in integrated schools. Phenomenology was chosen as the research design since it seeks to describe the nature of the occurrence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) and how people respond to the situation (Giorgi, 2012). Phenomenological research aims to describe the definition of what was experienced and how the participants experienced it. Furthermore, phenomenology is used to study phenomena as it is manifested from the experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the situation. As such, the researcher of this study explored the teachers' views, expectations, experiences, and recommendations regarding the interpersonal communication styles of principals in integrated schools, as phenomenological research was suitable for in-depth issues and exploring hidden voices.

### **2.2 Research Participants**

The research participants were ten teachers with at least three years of teaching experience from three public integrated schools in Monkayo East and West Districts in Monkayo, Davao de Oro. The researcher selected research participants from the different departments in integrated schools: kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and senior high school. Four participants were from Olaycon Integrated School, three from Cabangkalan Integrated School, and three from San Isidro Integrated School. The participants of this study were selected through a non-probability type of sampling, specifically purposive sampling.

### 2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher developed an interview guide for this study as a qualitative analysis technique. To ensure that all research questions were covered, the researcher employed a tool that contained a list of questions to keep track of.

The researcher followed the instructions for the data collection process. As part of the data-gathering procedure, the researcher sent a letter requesting permission from the school's superintendent of the division and the school's principal before conducting the interview. Following authorization and explanation of the purpose of the study, participants were asked to sign a consent form. After gaining the participants' consent, the in-depth interview was scheduled based on availability. As long as they could convey the ideas, the participants could respond to the questions in any language. Additionally, the researcher kept up the in-depth face-to-face interview with participants. The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed afterward.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The researcher used content or thematic analysis to manually delve into teachers' descriptions, expectations, experiences, and recommendations about the interpersonal communication styles of principals in integrated schools. The information gathered during interviews was verbatim transcribed, and the content of the informants' comments was classified using coding. After transcription and coding, the researcher extracted common themes from the informants' responses.

## 3. RESULT, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 On describing the school principal's interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and their interaction with other teachers in integrated schools.

Four themes were generated from the responses of the research participants to the first research question on how the teachers describe their principal's interpersonal communication style regarding work-related matters - Lack of Communication, No Accuracy in Giving Feedback, Setting Boundaries, and Structuring Style. Two themes regarding personal matters - Very Open/Approachable and Considerate. Moreover, three themes regarding the principals' interaction with other teachers in integrated schools - Fair Treatment, Egalitarian and Withdrawal, and No One Deserted.

**Lack of Communication.** This theme highlights the negative consequences that can arise when there is an insufficient exchange of information within the school. In integrated schools, it can hinder the timely dissemination of important information to teachers, students, and other stakeholders, such as school policies, plans, and activities. Three of the participants shared that the lack of communication in their school is evident in the failure of the school head to effectively communicate the School Improvement Plan to all teachers, which caused misunderstandings among the teachers and delays in accomplishing their tasks. This theme resonates with the related studies by Rahmadani and Dalle (2020) and Suriansyah (2014), highlighting the importance of effective communication in fostering a harmonious relationship among school members and improving performance.

**No Accuracy in Giving Feedback.** This theme reveals the potential drawbacks of a principal's reluctance to provide specific and constructive feedback. Three of the participants' statements support this theme by highlighting the fear of the principal being criticized by the teachers, which may result in vague and ineffective feedback. The participants also observe that the principal tends to avoid criticizing teacher mistakes. While this might seem like a positive trait, it can lead to a lack of accuracy in feedback, as teachers may need more specific feedback for professional improvement. The theme aligns with the research of Suntani et al. (2021), emphasizing the principal's role in enhancing teacher preparedness and maintaining motivation.

**Setting Boundaries.** Three participants described their principal as friendly. However, they can still feel that there is a boundary between the teacher and principal, especially in work-related matters, so they still follow their principal. The participants also shared that it is crucial to establish rules and boundaries that should be followed. Doing so sets expectations for behavior and ensures everyone is doing their tasks and meeting deadlines while maintaining a healthy relationship with the principal. It establishes clear expectations and promotes respect for others while ensuring that everyone on the same page can support accurate feedback by establishing a framework for communication and ensuring that constructive criticism is delivered respectfully.

The findings relate to the style of communication, which is assertive and structural. According to Okotoni and Akinwale (2019), the principal who uses an assertive style has high self-esteem and the confidence to

communicate with others without getting offended or being manipulative effectively. Moreover, according to Pipas and Jaradat (2010), assertive communication is the capacity to communicate and engage in ways that respect one's rights and those of others while simultaneously standing up for one's needs, wants, and personal boundaries. On the other hand, in the structural style, the principal sets rules and standards and organizes schedules that encourage employees to meet deadlines (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Structuring Style.** The theme of structuring in communication refers to the use of communication styles that establish schedules or impose organization. Based on the four participants' statements, it can be inferred that the interpersonal communication style used in their workplace is structured. It means the communication is organized and follows a particular system or framework, such as schedules and rules. The participants shared that their principal always has a checklist regarding the task they must accomplish and is reminded of the deadlines. By doing so, the teachers are challenged and encouraged to accomplish their tasks on time. They also added that their principal knows how to say "no" when necessary, especially when the request does not abide by the rules established by the principal. It concerns the interpersonal communication structuring style utilized to impose organization or set up timetables. Leaders using this style would likely cite company standards or rules. It should usually be counterbalanced with the egalitarian style (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Very Open/Approachable.** This theme emphasizes the principal's receptiveness and kindness towards personal matters. All participants shared that their principal's presence creates a comfortable environment that encourages teachers to speak up, even those who are usually shy or reserved. However, three participants said that boundaries still exist in their schools. Despite the ease of communication, they still have a sense of respect and professionalism, as they highlighted that their principal is very approachable. It fosters effective interpersonal relationships and promotes a positive school climate. The findings relate to the open-communication style by Okolona and Akinwale (2019), which allows school principals to see teachers not only as workers but as human beings whose views and opinions on all matters affecting them must be heard. It also allows school members to share feedback, ideas, and criticism.

**Considerate.** All participants' answers provide examples of how their principal can display considerate behavior towards them by being supportive, easy to talk to, and lenient regarding personal matters. However, the principal also reminds them to be responsible and practical in their decisions. This theme reflects the principal's ability to show kindness and concern for others' needs and feelings. By taking into account the well-being of individuals in personal matters, the principal creates a supportive environment where individuals feel valued and cared for. The study findings resonate with the study of Suntani et al. (2021), emphasizing the importance of the principal's interpersonal communication skills in creating a supportive and conducive school environment where personal matters are addressed effectively and individuals feel valued and motivated.

**Fair Treatment.** This theme means treating everyone impartially, without bias or favoritism, and ensuring everyone receives equal opportunities and rights. All participants emphasized the importance of fair treatment, especially in integrated schools. However, only six participants shared how their principal treats everyone fairly and without bias or favoritism even though the integrated school comprises three departments and the teachers have different needs and expertise. It relates to the inclusive communication style. It is one in which principals take conscious steps to ensure that all school staff members feel involved in the decisions that affect their day-to-day activities (Barnlund, 2008). In other words, a principal of a school that practices inclusive communication is approachable and welcomes input from both inside and outside the institution. (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019).

**Egalitarian and Withdrawal.** Four participants described their principal as having traits of both egalitarianism and withdrawal. He allows teachers to share their ideas and opinions, indicating that he treats everyone equally and values their input. On the other hand, he also exhibits traits of withdrawal, particularly during a crisis or conflict. He tends to withdraw and becomes afraid to face the problem, leaving the teachers to devise solutions. This theme highlights the principal's interpersonal communication style characterized by inclusivity and moments of withdrawal, wherein the principal values teachers' input and treats everyone equally but also withdraw and avoids confronting problems.

It relates to the study of Sethi and Seth (2009), which states that the egalitarian interpersonal communication style allows others to express their ideas and opinions to build a mutual. In contrast, a withdrawal style of interpersonal communication is highly discouraged since, in this style, the principals try to avoid using their influence and may indicate disinterest or unwillingness to participate in the discussion, which can cause conflict and distrust.

**No one Deserted.** Three participants shared that their principal ensures everyone is included and understands the situation clearly. He actively seeks out those who have not gathered yet to ensure they are not left out and everyone is on the same page. Their principal uses the radio to call out missing people and shows his dedication to creating unity among the teachers. This theme emphasizes the principal's commitment to inclusivity and unity, actively seeking out those who might be left out. This finding relates to an inclusive communication style in which principals ensure that all school staff members feel involved in the decisions that affect their day-to-day activities (Barnlund, 2008).

### **3.2 On teachers' expectations regarding their school principals' interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and their interaction with other teachers in integrated schools.**

Five themes were generated from participants' responses to the second research question regarding the teachers' expectations of their principal's interpersonal communication style regarding work-related matters – Well-Communication with Teachers, With Firm Decision Making, Can Establish Rules, Friendly and Open, and Assertive. One theme regarding personal matters - Hold Grudges. Moreover, three themes regarding the principals' interaction with other teachers in integrated schools - Making Arguments as No Big Deal, Inclusive Communication, and Direct Communication to All.

**Well-Communication with Teachers.** Six participants emphasized the importance of well-communication with teachers, stating that they expect the plans in school to be well-communicated and that the teachers are well-informed. However, in their school, their principal rarely communicates the school plans to all the teachers, which causes misunderstandings and disagreements between the teachers and the principal. This theme highlights the importance of clearly and effectively communicating school plans and projects to ensure teachers' understanding and engagement. This finding aligns with related studies that emphasize the significance of open and inclusive communication styles (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019) and the value of an egalitarian style in stimulating ideas and reaching mutual understanding (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Firm Decision Making and Can Establish Rules.** Three participants in this study stated that their principal tends to withdraw his decision, especially in times of crisis, confusing the teachers. The findings highlighted the significance of making informed decisions guided by principles and convictions as expected by participants; having a firm decision-making approach is critical in the workplace. Like the principal, a leader with firm decision-making skills can make informed choices guided by principles and convictions rather than baseless factors.

Moreover, the participants also expect that the principal knows how to establish authority and say “no” when necessary. However, according to the participants, their principal is too kind and considerate to teachers even if it is no longer in line with the rules and policies of the school. Another three participants also emphasized that leaders must establish rules to ensure that paper works and report deadlines are met. Rules can ensure that everyone is on the same page and that there is a sense of accountability in the workplace. However, it is also crucial for leaders to balance their strictness with kindness and approachability. This theme underscores the need for principals to set clear expectations and boundaries to create a productive working environment.

The findings correspond to the controlling style of interpersonal communication, which, when used by respected individuals, can be effective in times of crisis but may alienate workers if overused. Moreover, the findings also relate to the structuring style used to establish schedules or impose organization. It was also necessary to inform others of goals or procedures when a group must perform complex tasks. Both these interpersonal communication styles must be counterbalanced with the egalitarian style of interpersonal communication (Sethi & Seth, 2009).

**Friendly and Open.** All participants shared how their principal speaks to them in a friendly manner, allowing them to be more open to the principal regarding their needs, ideas, and criticism. Additionally, being approachable emphasized the importance of leaders being friendly and open, making themselves available for ideas, questions, and concerns fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. A friendly and open demeanor is expected in leaders, which can make individuals feel at ease when approaching their leader. In contrast, a cold or distant demeanor can make individuals hesitant to approach. This style is crucial, especially in work-related matters. The findings relate to the egalitarian interpersonal communication style, which stimulates others to voice their views and perspectives to reach a mutual understanding. In most situations—mainly when cooperation is needed—it is more effective than the controlling style (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Assertive.** All participants expected the principal to be assertive. Being assertive emphasized the importance of principal confidently expressing their thoughts and ideas while remaining respectful and polite. Participants shared that their principal is assertive and communicates their thoughts and ideas confidently. However, they also note that the principal remains respectful and polite when expressing his opinions regarding work-related matters. It aligns with the assertive communication style, which creates opportunities for open debate when different viewpoints, needs, and options are respectfully heard and considered to find a win-win solution to particular challenges (Pipas & Jaradat, 2010).

**Hold Grudges.** It is also expected that some people find it challenging to let go of negative emotions and hold on to them for a long time, which can affect their relationships with others. However, only some people react the same way. Two participants shared that although they have argued with their principal, their principal does not hold grudges and separates their issues from work. Participants' experience of their principal not holding grudges demonstrates the importance of maintaining a healthy work environment by not allowing personal conflicts to affect professional relationships. This theme aligns with the open style of communication, which encourages all staff to speak their minds on issues bothering them regarding school policies, programs, and views, and the opinions expressed will not be used against them (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019).

**Making Arguments as No Big Deal.** This theme highlights the importance of handling disagreements and conflicts healthily and constructively, promoting relationship maintenance and conflict resolution. Three participants emphasized that their principal has a non-confrontational approach toward arguments and does not hold grudges. Despite being insulted by the other teachers in front of everyone, the principal responded appropriately and moved past the incident. It shows that a calm and rational argument approach can help maintain relationships and avoid unnecessary conflicts. This finding aligns with the open communication style. All school members feel free to share feedback, ideas, and criticism at all levels (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019).

**Inclusive Communication.** Inclusive communication promotes collaboration and fosters an environment where individuals feel heard and understood. According to all participants, a principal who practices inclusive communication considers the opinions and views of teachers and stakeholders during decision-making processes. It promotes diversity and ensures everyone's views and perspectives are considered, fostering collaboration and better decision-making. Collaboration is a central theme that involves working together towards common goals, but it needs to include all members to avoid feelings of exclusion. These findings align with related studies highlighting the significance of establishing openness, empathy, support, positive feelings, and equality (Suntani et al., 2021).

**Direct Communication to All.** Effective leadership is expected to communicate directly with all members to promote inclusivity and collaboration among the teachers. However, the four participants in the study shared that their principal does not relay information directly to the recipient but instead uses intermediaries. As highlighted by participants, principals must communicate directly with all teachers, regardless of their position in the school hierarchy, to ensure that all members feel included and valued. It aligns with the study of Berkovich and Eyal (2018), which revealed that one effective method of communication with teachers is face-to-face meetings, as they facilitate conveying messages while allowing principals to express openness, empathy, support, positive sentiments, and equality more comfortably.

### **3.3 On the teachers' experiences regarding the interpersonal communication styles of their principals in terms of work-related matters, personal matters, and their interaction with other teachers in integrated schools.**

Five themes were generated from participants' responses to the third research question regarding teachers' experiences regarding their principal's interpersonal communication style regarding work-related matters. The principal is Not Vocal, Withdrawal during Conflict, Open communication and Firm decision, Nice Approach, and Balance between Egalitarian and Structuring Interpersonal Communication Style. And one theme regarding personal matters - Very Kind, Approachable, Concerned, and Considerate.

**The principal is Not Vocal.** School leaders must have open communication and willingness to address concerns and issues, which can lead to better productivity and a positive school environment. However, three participants said their current school head is not vocal, especially when correcting teachers. Teachers can only grow professionally if the principal corrects them and suggests improvement. Therefore, having a vocal and communicative leader can lead to better productivity and a positive school environment. Magnus (2009) warns that poor communication can harm relationships permanently, reducing commitment, productivity, trust, and respect.

**Withdrawal during Conflict.** Three participants highlight the importance of effective communication and collaboration in managing conflicts. One participant shared that an integrated school can present unique challenges, mainly when the school is new and the school head is still adjusting to the integrated school system. In this case, the school head struggled to manage the high school department, which caused a conflict between the school head and the participant, who was urging him to follow up on the paperwork of volunteer teachers. Unfortunately, the school head withdrew from the problem, which led to poor communication and unresolved conflict. Another participant also shared her experience with her principal, who needed a stronger sense of authority, resulting in the principal's withdrawal from problems and hesitation in making decisions.

When a principal withdraws during a conflict, the teachers may experience delays and irritation. Therefore, it is essential for the principal to be present during conflict and to address concerns effectively. The finding is consistent with the study of Abed, Abed, and Shackelford 2023, wherein the study revealed that the participants could grow professionally and personally when directed by others and when respected people exhibited a controlling style during a crisis. Similarly, Sethi and Seth (2009) also note that the controlling style is used to direct others and gain their compliance and can be effective when used on occasion by respected individuals, particularly in times of crisis.

**Open communication and Firm decision.** One participant shared his experience with his principal, who creates standards and expectations based on the principal's experiences and shares them with the teachers to improve teaching. During meetings, the principal shares his plans and goals for the future and encourages his teachers to be open with them; he also encourages suggestions but disagrees with them without offending them. This approach creates a culture of mutual respect and encourages team members to share their thoughts and ideas openly. This theme underscores the importance of leaders fostering open communication and making firm decisions. It aligns with the findings of Dwyer and Hopwood (2019), who identified the significance of the egalitarian style and the need to balance it with the structuring style while emphasizing the importance of leaders treating others with kindness, respect, and empathy (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Nice Approach.** In this matter, A participant shared her experience with her principal, who is enjoyable to work with and does not make them feel inferior. The principal tries to level himself with his teachers, being open and willing to help without showing off his knowledge or expertise. The principal's approach is gentle and kind, making his teachers feel valued and respected. He provides ideas and guidance without making his teachers feel they know nothing about the subject. This theme emphasizes the significance of treating others with kindness, respect, and empathy. The findings align with the study of Kambeya (2008), which revealed that teachers' performance is also impacted by the principals' attitudes, beliefs, and conduct. Kambeya (2008) also added that teachers were inspired to exert more effort when principals had solid interposed interpersonal abilities.

**The balance between Egalitarian and Structuring Interpersonal Communication Style.** This theme emphasizes the need for leaders to balance being approachable and establishing rules and standards. Based on the three participants' experience, it is essential to have an approachable leader who is willing to listen to others' opinions while also establishing rules and standards. Two participants emphasized the importance of having a leader who shows leadership skills without making anyone feel inferior or left out. They shared that their principal gathers the team for decision-making, reaches a consensus, is transparent and informative, and handles critique and counseling well without offending anyone. It aligns with counterbalancing the structured communication style with an egalitarian interpersonal one (Sethi & Seth, 2009; Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019).

**Very Kind, Approachable, Concerned, and Considerate.** All participants' responses highlight the importance of having a school head who is easy to approach and is understanding of their staff's needs. According to the participants, the school head is very optimistic about personal matters and is not confused but can be taken advantage of at times. Moreover, four informants shared their experiences with a principal who demonstrated concern and consideration toward them. They shared how their superior went out of their way to resolve their lateness problem due to their child's health, showing genuine concern for their well-being. Despite concerns about potential exploitation, the participants appreciated their school head's positive and understanding nature. It is consistent with the study by Suntani et al. (2021) that highlights the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in increasing work motivation.

### **3.4 On the teachers' recommendations regarding the principals' interpersonal communication styles regarding work-related matters, personal matters, and their interaction with the teachers in an integrated school.**

Seven themes were generated from the responses of participants to the fourth research question regarding the recommendations of teachers with their principal's interpersonal communication style regarding work-related matters - Balance Between Controlling and Egalitarian Interpersonal Communication Style, Open and Well-Disseminated Information, Know how to Supervise, Study on Deeper Interpersonal Communication Style, Include All Teachers, Direct Dissemination of Information, and Knowing Teacher's Differences. Two themes regarding personal matters - Set aside Personal Issue/s and Direct Communications with Teachers. Moreover, three themes regarding the principals' interaction with other teachers in integrated schools - Be Supportive and Not Intimidating, Fair to All, and More Team Building Activities.

**Balance Between Controlling and Egalitarian Interpersonal Communication Style.** Three participants recommend that the principal should know how to balance being too strict, open, and considerate. A single communication style may not work well for everyone. When respected people employ the controlling style, especially during times of crisis, it works. However, it can also make the employees feel isolated and disconnected, and they may become disengaged or unproductive. In contrast, the egalitarian style is more effective in most situations, particularly when cooperation is needed. Therefore, there should be a balance between the two interpersonal communication styles.

According to Sethi and Seth (2009), a controlling style is a one-way communication to direct others and gain compliance. Wherein can be effective when used occasionally, particularly in times of crisis, but it can also alienate workers. Comparatively, an egalitarian communication style involves knowledge sharing instead of behavior direction (Sethi & Seth, 2009).

**Open and Well-Disseminated Information.** All study participants recommend that open and well-disseminated information is essential in promoting collaboration and fostering organizational trust. Their responses support this theme by emphasizing the importance of timeliness, transparency, and completeness in communication. They stress the importance of being transparent about the school plans and ensuring the information is timely and well-disseminated to all stakeholders. It is related to interpersonal communication styles such as the structuring style, which is used to establish schedules or impose organization (Sethi & Seth, 2009). Ensuring the information is well-structured and complete is essential to avoid confusion and unnecessary explanations.

**Know how to Supervise.** Six participants highlighted the importance of adequate supervision in managing an integrated school. Their response shows that adequate supervision is essential in managing and ensuring work quality in an integrated school. It also emphasized the need to know how to supervise as school head. However, adequate supervision requires more than just directing behavior. It also involves evaluating tasks and providing constructive feedback to improve work quality, highlighting the importance of adequate supervision in managing an organization, team, or group of individuals. It is related to interpersonal communication styles such as the controlling style, one-way communication used to direct others and gain compliance counterbalanced with the egalitarian style of communication (Sethi & Seth, 2009).

**Study on Deeper Interpersonal Communication Style.** It emphasizes the importance of studying deeper interpersonal communication styles to communicate and lead in an integrated school effectively. Three participants highlighted that the communication style of a principal can reveal what kind of leader they are. Effective communication is crucial in an integrated school where handling multiple levels and teachers with different needs and expertise can be challenging. The participants recommend that principals undergo training or seminars to improve their communication skills. It aligns with the study of Dwyer and Hopwood (2019), which revealed that leaders in work contexts employ a particular interpersonal communication style based on their personality traits, leadership style, and employment experience, and they may adjust their interpersonal to adapt to the circumstances or to suit the context.

**Include All Teachers.** This theme recognizes that every teacher is valuable and unique, and their input should be considered in shaping the school's policies and programs. Four participants highlight the importance of conducting meetings with all teachers, not just limited to department heads and master teachers. Involving all teachers can prevent misunderstandings, particularly in financial matters, and help the principal defend their decisions. It aligns with related studies that collectively support the significance of fair treatment, inclusivity, and effective interpersonal communication in promoting teacher motivation, collaboration, and overall well-being (Suntani et al., 2021; Kambeya, 2008).



**Direct Dissemination of Information.** The theme is about the importance of providing accurate and timely information to individuals or groups without involving other people who may have personal biases. Five participants recommend that the school head directly contact teachers to disseminate information. It ensures that teachers receive accurate and unbiased information without the risk of personal bias or misunderstandings arising when information is passed through intermediaries. The participants believe that direct dissemination of information is crucial in maintaining clear communication and avoiding conflicts.

It aligns with the study by Kambeya (2008), which emphasizes the importance of effective interpersonal communication between principals and teachers. The study reveals that teachers prefer face-to-face communication with their principals. In addition, Keyton (2011) highlights the tendency of individuals to selectively interpret information based on their beliefs, values, and needs.

**Knowing Teacher's Differences.** The theme highlights the importance of recognizing and understanding each teacher's unique qualities and needs, particularly in an integrated school. All participants emphasized the significance of being open to everyone, regardless of their status and getting to know each teacher well to apply the appropriate interpersonal communication style to avoid misunderstandings. It aligns with the study of Plumberg (2018), which revealed that the primary cause of communication barriers is diverse communication styles, which stem from inherent human differences. People tend to interpret information selectively, favoring messages aligning with their beliefs, values, and needs (Keyton, 2011). Therefore, knowing teachers' differences and adjusting the appropriate interpersonal communication style will avoid communication barriers.

**Set aside Personal Issue/s.** It shows how personal issues can sometimes cloud judgment and result in unfair treatment or evaluation. Separating personal matters from work-related issues is essential to ensure fairness and objectivity. Two participants emphasize the importance of setting aside personal issues in the workplace, particularly when evaluating a teacher's work. These findings signify that the principal must be an open communicator who most appreciates other people. This type of communication style encourages all staff to speak their minds on issues bothering them regarding school policies, programs, and views, and the opinions expressed will not be used against them (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019).

**Direct Communications with Teachers.** The theme emphasizes the importance of having personal and direct conversations with teachers, especially in discussing personal matters and resolving issues. It allows for open and honest communication and a better understanding of each other's perspectives, leading to better problem-solving and decision-making. Four participants emphasize that one-on-one conversation builds trust and allows the teacher to open up about their concerns without fear of being judged or embarrassed.

It was also recommended to avoid hierarchical communication to avoid distortion of message in order to create a positive and healthy working relationship. According to Widhiastuti (2012), hierarchical communication influences the organization's members because there is involvement between one another. Thus, communication distortion may happen wherein the message will be modified. It causes a decrease in communication accuracy between the sender and receiver.

**Be Supportive and Not Intimidating.** All participants recommend creating a supportive, non-threatening atmosphere to encourage effective communication and collaboration. The participants emphasized the importance of being open and approachable, rather than intimidating, to create a positive and comfortable environment for communication and collaboration. Reaching out to subordinates and encouraging pleasant and fruitful relationships with them is also crucial. Suntani et al. (2021) assert that interpersonal communication will simplify transmitting ideas such as openness, empathy, support, a good feeling, and promoting equality.

**Fair to All.** All participants' statements emphasize the importance of treating everyone fairly and equally, regardless of their status or position. Participants stress the importance of being fair in providing for the needs of teachers, particularly in an integrated school. Furthermore, in treating everyone equally, favoritism should not be practiced, and the voices of all teachers should be heard regarding their needs, regardless of their status or position. Lunenberg (2010) also said that listening ability, the communication style of administrators, cultural heritage, biases, and prejudices often serve as barriers to communication.

**More Team Building Activities.** Two participants said there is a noticeable division between elementary and secondary teachers, and one way to bridge this gap is through team-building activities. These activities allow teachers to interact and learn from each other, regardless of their teaching levels or subjects. It aims to promote collaboration

and unity among teachers. Additionally, team-building activities can also help improve communication and cooperation within the school, leading to a more cohesive and productive work environment. It is related to the study of Zia (2012), which reveals that team-building activities have a long-term beneficial correlation between staff morale and employee retention.

### 3.5 Implications for Practice.

*On Describing the Principal's Interpersonal Communication Styles Integrated School.* Based on the research findings, leaders can implement regular communication channels with their staff and stakeholders to address the lack of communication. To ensure precision in feedback, leaders can provide specific and constructive feedback, acknowledging their staff's strengths while addressing areas that need improvement. Additionally, leaders should prioritize giving timely information and structuring communication to prevent miscommunication and misunderstandings. Regarding personal matters, it is recommended that principals in integrated schools adopt an interpersonal communication style that is open and approachable, fosters mutual respect and collaboration, and is considerate of the needs and feelings of others. They should create a space where people can express themselves freely while maintaining professionalism and boundaries.

Regarding the principal's interaction with other teachers, to address the identified weakness of the principal's tendency to withdraw during times of crisis, it may be beneficial for the principal to undergo training or seminars to improve their conflict management skills. This can help the principal feel more equipped and confident to address conflicts as they arise and ensure that teachers feel supported during difficult times.

*On Expectation Regarding the Principal's Interpersonal Communication Styles.* Regarding work-related matters, principals should focus on improving communication with teachers, actively supervising and monitoring teachers' performance. It is also essential to have a transparent decision-making process that considers teachers' opinions and ideas while demonstrating firmness and authority when necessary. Regarding personal matters, it is recommended that school principals should prioritize developing their interpersonal communication skills in terms of personal matters. Principals should also be open to constructive criticism and demonstrate a willingness to improve based on feedback.

Regarding principals' interaction with other teachers in an integrated school, it is recommended that school leaders undergo professional development training in effective communication. Specifically, the training should focus on developing the egalitarian and relinquishing styles of communication, which involve treating everyone equally, being receptive to the ideas of others, and sharing information. Additionally, the training should emphasize the importance of non-confrontational conflict resolution, inclusivity, and establishing authority without being abusive.

*On Experiences on Principal's Interpersonal Communication Styles.* Regarding work-related matters, the study's results suggest that principals should be trained to create a fair and non-factional school environment, be more communicative and decisive, and avoid withdrawing during conflicts. Moreover, regarding personal matters, being kind, approachable, and considerate is essential in creating a family-like environment, and principals should focus on developing practical communication skills to build trust, openness, and collaboration among teachers.

*On Recommendations on Principal's Interpersonal Communication Styles in Integrated Schools.* To address the lapses and weak areas identified in the research findings regarding work-related matters, principals should focus on developing a more balanced interpersonal communication style, which includes both controlling and egalitarian styles, depending on the situation. Principals should also understand different communication styles and how they can be adjusted to suit different situations and individuals to manage an integrated school effectively. While regarding personal matters, principals must set aside personal issues and establish boundaries while maintaining an approachable and considerate attitude toward teachers. In addition, principals should directly communicate with teachers, especially regarding personal matters, to avoid misunderstanding.

Moreover, regarding the principals' interaction with other teachers, it is recommended that the principal focus on developing a supportive and non-intimidating communication style that fosters effective communication and collaboration. The principal should also strive to treat everyone equally, establish clear rules and standards, maintain consistency, and create opportunities for team-building activities that promote collaboration and unity among teachers.

### 3.6 Implications of Future Research.

In as much as the study was limited to the responses of the teachers of Anagase Integrated School, Cabangkalan Integrated School, and Olaycon Integrated School in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, the following are considered:

First, future research may be conducted by selecting teachers from regular schools other than integrated schools. Second, another research of the same focus may be conducted in another location to investigate the same phenomenon in teachers' experiences regarding the interpersonal communication style of principals in integrated schools. Third, a re-interview of the same research participants and informants may be conducted to see whether their understanding of the interpersonal communication style of principals in integrated schools has changed over time.

Fourth, this study was done in an integrated school. Further research could be done to investigate the same phenomenon among regular public and private schools. Finally, the study's findings are viewed from the lens of the selected teacher research participants and informants. Another research could be conducted to determine principals' understanding and experiences regarding interpersonal communication styles in integrated schools from the principals' viewpoint.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenological study of the teacher's experiences of the principal's interpersonal communication style in integrated schools provides valuable insights and recommendations for effective communication. Clear and effective communication, fair treatment, and open communication are crucial for work-related matters. Principals should establish authority while maintaining friendly relationships and promoting inclusivity and collaboration. In personal matters, kindness, approachability, and maintaining boundaries are essential. Interactions with other teachers should be fair, friendly, and inclusive. The study also recommends recognizing different communication styles, involving stakeholders in decision-making, balancing egalitarian and structured communication, and using the controlling style of interpersonal communication during complex situations while avoiding the withdrawal style of interpersonal communication. Thus, implementing these recommendations can create a positive and productive school environment in integrated schools.

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