Research Article

# The impact of interpersonal communication on employee performance during work from home

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| Article Information | Abstract |
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| | Interpersonal communication is a process of exchanging information, ideas, feelings, and opinion that two or more people carry out through verbal or non-verbal. This study aims to find out how far interpersonal communication impacts employee performance during work from home. In this research, six people were selected as research objects using purposive sampling. A semi-structured interview was conducted, and a list of questions was developed. Analysis of the research data using thematic analysis. The results of this study indicate the extent to which the impact of interpersonal communication while working at home, 1) good relations are established between employees, 2) greater employee involvement, and 3) increased teamwork. According to the study's findings, enhanced teamwork, higher employee involvement, and strong relationships among co-workers indicate how much interpersonal communication affects work-from-home employees. Because of the effectiveness of their communication, their performance is affected, and performance outcomes improve with improved staff communication. |

## 1. Introduction

In early March 2020, Covid was first detected in Indonesia, and thousands of people were exposed to the virus in a short time. The central and local governments are taking steps to stop the spread of Covid-19, which is already large in Indonesia, including implementing work-from-home (WFH). Ashal (2020) states that work from home is a job that is usually done in the office being done at home. With the implementation of working from home, employees must adapt to the activities they usually do in the office, and now they are doing it at home. Even though working from home is enforced, it does not mean reducing activities and responsibilities. In practice, there may be barriers that can affect employee performance. For example, there is

interference during a video conference, so the information received needs to be clarified.

Communication and human resources in an organization cannot be separated because employees, in this case, human resources, are the main assets in an organization with a strategic role as thinkers, planners, and controllers of all organizational activities. Communication is how humans construct their reality. Interpersonal communication skills can help a person obtain correct knowledge and information to develop skills and build social relationships effectively. Through interpersonal communication, individuals can express messages they want, feel, and think about others and then can influence the fostering of good relations. This will happen if the individual implementing the communication has an assertive attitude. Interpersonal communication in its

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application in the work environment influences employee performance.

Performance is a result achieved by individuals in their work according to certain criteria that apply to a job (Robbins & Judge: 2013). Employee performance can develop well if followed by good communication as well. One way to optimize employee performance is effective communication in the company. Effective communication can bring up a good Work environment. Companies need effective communication so that company performance increases. Effective interpersonal communication is important for organization members because it can bring results in the exchange of information and mutual understanding. According to Devito (2016), the effectiveness of interpersonal communities consists of openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality (Wello & Novia, 2021). Communication is very important to establish cooperative relationships between people involved and enormously influences achieving organizational goals. Communication will enable each organization member to help and hold each other interaction. A warm, friendly relationship is strongly influenced by a person's ability to communicate with others. Therefore, communication in the company must be effective so as not to impact employee performance. Good employee communication can create a good work environment and positively impact the company.

Wello and Novia (2021) stated that interpersonal communication involves sharing information, feelings, and meanings through verbal and non-verbal messages (face-to-face). Interpersonal communication is not just about what is being interpreted and what language is used, but how a message is said and a non-verbal message is sent through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Interpersonal communication refers to the verbal and non-verbal interaction of two or more interdependent individuals (Devito, 2016). Hartley (1993) stated that interpersonal communication is always two-way. The so-called linear model of communication is one of the most popular ways of representing communication in a diagram (Hartley, 1993). This model suggests that we have linear and unidirectional communication. In other words, these messages circulate between the sender and receiver along specific channels, though there may be some interference noise (Hartley, 1993). Budyatna and Ganiem (2011) argue that interpersonal communication does not have to be face-to-face (through the media). The media can now communicate interpersonal communication (Liliwei, 2015).

Devito (2016) stated the five effectiveness of interpersonal communication as follows:

- Openness, the quality of openness, refers to three aspects of interpersonal communication. First, an effective interpersonal communicator must be open to the person they interact. Secondly, the communicators be willing to react honestly to the impending stimulus. The third is the "possession" of squeezes and minds (Bochner & Kelly, 1974).
- Empathy is feeling something like the person who experienced it, being in the same situation, and feeling the same feelings in the same way. To be sympathetic, on the other hand, is to feel part of others or be sad.
- Supportiveness, an effective interpersonal relationship is one in which there is a supportive attitude. We show a supportive attitude by behaving: a) Descriptive, not evaluative. Description means our delivery and perception without judgment. In contrast to evaluative, which provides an assessment of other people. b) Spontaneous, not strategic. People who are spontaneous in their communication and candid and open in expressing their thoughts usually respond in the same way, namely frankly and openly. Spontaneity means an honest attitude and is considered not to cover up hidden motives. c) Provisional, not very sure. Being proportional means being tentative and open-minded, listening to opposing views, and changing positions if circumstances require it.
- Positiveness, we communicate positive attitudes in interpersonal communication in at least two ways. First, interpersonal communication is fostered if a person has a positive attitude towards themselves. Secondly, positive feelings for communication situations are essential for effective interaction.
- Equality, in an interpersonal relationship characterized by equality, incompleteness, and conflict, are seen more as an attempt to understand the inevitable differences than as an opportunity to bring down the other party. Equality does not require that we take and accept all the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the other party. Equality means that we get the other party, or according to Carl Rogers, equality asks us to give "unconditional positive rewards" to others.

Performance results from an employee carrying out his responsibilities to achieve company goals. Performance is a work result achieved by employees individually and in an organization's group (Busro,2018). Kustono (2020) stated that employee performance is employees' work in fulfilling obligations under their duties and responsibilities. According to Robbins and Judge (2013), factors that have an impact on employee performance are as follows:

- Quality is measured by the employee's understanding of the work produced and the perfection of individual tasks and abilities. The quality of work can be described from the good and bad results of employee work in completing work and the knowledge and skills of employees in carrying out the tasks assigned to them.
- Quantity is the amount obtained, expressed in terms such as the number of units and the number of completed activity cycles. Quantity measures the number of unit work results and the number of activity cycles completed by employees so that employee performance can be measured through the number (of units/processes).
- Punctuality is the activity completed at a specified time, judging from the output results and maximizing the time available for other activities. Employee Performance can also be measured by the timeliness of the employee in completing the work assigned to him. So as not to

interfere with other work that is part of the employee's duties.

- Effectiveness is the use of organizational resources (labor, money, technology, raw materials) maximized to increase each unit's yield in the use of resources. That is, the use of human resources and resources in the form of technology, capital, information, and raw materials in the organization can be used as much as possible by employees.
- Independence is a level where individuals are committed to the agency and responsibility to the office. This means independent employees, that is, when doing their work, do not need to be supervised and can carry out their work functions without asking for help or guidance from others or supervisors.

Nakrosiene et al. (2019) argue that work done entirely at home and where remote workers have work agreements are defined as telework or working from home. Work done from home or from a place other than an office and where a person has a working agreement with multiple employers is defined as freelance telework (Nakrosiene et al., 2019). Bailey and Kurland (2002) stated that the work done from places other than a traditional office space had been defined as telework, telecommuting, virtual work, home-based teleworking, mobile telework, remote work, etc. Teleworkers can be more productive because they can work during their most productive time and be less distracted by co-workers (Golden & Veiga, 2008). Telework is defined as work that is performed from different locations (such as a home) that enable workers to access their labor activities by the use of information and communication technologies (Nilles, 1997)

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

This study uses a semi-structured interview technique. Interviews were in Indonesian and recorded using an audio recorder with the consent of each participant. After that, the researchers made a transcript of the interview and translated it into English. There are two main stages in collecting this data. First, all participants were contacted and asked about their availability. Second, participants can be interviewed conveniently according to their wishes. The number of questions totaled ten, and examples of interview questions are as follows:

- How do you communicate when working from home?
- Do you and your co-workers share information about your task during work from home?".

### 2.2. Participants

The research subjects, six people, were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The purposive technique selects the sample according to the researchers' criteria by determining the characteristics or special requirements to answer the questions. For privacy reasons, the informants were given the initials of the interviewed employees 1,2,3,4, and 6.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques are a process of processing data into new information. Thematic analysis is one way to analyze data to identify patterns and find themes through data that researchers have collected. The results of this study show the themes of the impact of interpersonal communication during work from home. Braun and Clarke (2006) reveal that themes are very important to data based on research questions that represent patterned response levels or meanings in a data set. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Holoway and Todres (2003) stated that this thematic analysis is the foundation for qualitative research analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Many people do not realize interpersonal communication is very important in the workplace. Along with technological advances, communication does not have to be done face-to-face. With the implementation of work-from-home, we can determine the extent of the impact of interpersonal communication during work-from-home. The researchers found three themes in this study as follows:

### 3.1. Establish Good Relations between Colleagues

Based on interview sessions conducted with employees, they explained the extent of the impact of interpersonal communication while working from home. One of the effects of interpersonal communication during work from home is good relations between employees. Even though they work from home, which does not mean they do not have a good relationship. Establishing a good relationship at work is necessary to create a harmonious relationship. An example of a good relationship that exists between employees is mutual support.

*Of course, we maintain good relations while working from home and provide information to each other. My friends and I are more actively connected on social media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, etc. The ways we do so that our relationship is maintained well even though we do work from home are, for example: Asking for news, sending greetings, sending prayers, sharing photos, videos & sending gifts on special occasions, such as us: Eid al-Fitr, birthdays and Christmas and we remind each other when we get information from superiors.* (Interview, employee 2).

Another response from employees

*Yes, of course, because our work is interrelated. So, it is important to build good relationships with colleagues. So that we can still exchange information because sometimes one job is related to another, for example, I did the first stage and the second stage, and another did the next one, so the communication we do must go well, and the information must still be received* (Interview, employee 3)

*We build a good relationship during work from home by always communicating. It is like asking how you are, whether the work is done, or supporting each other. Because we work from home, we communicate through social media such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook* (Interview, employee 4).

This study showed a good relationship between employees while working from home. Because the communication they do is effective, their relationship is good. Employees who have good communication will have good relationships with their co-workers and will have an impact on their productivity. Good relations that employees own will make it easy for them to carry out the tasks assigned. Moreover, of course, everyone wants to have a good relationship with anyone because, after all, everyone wants to work with people they have a good relationship. Wello & Novia (2021) argue that one of people's greatest desires is to form and maintain relationships with others. The more a person has good relations with others, the wider their relationship. Extensive relationships make it easier for us to get various kinds of information. Besides, that relationships can also open up many new opportunities in that we will likely be involved.

## 3.2. Employee Engagement is Getting Bigger

Based on interview sessions conducted with employees, they explained the extent of the impact of interpersonal communication while working from home. One of the effects of interpersonal communication during WFH is greater employee involvement. Because employees are allowed to be involved in the decision-making process, a sense of responsibility arises, leading to greater employee involvement. In addition, employees also have empathy and believe in togetherness in completing any work given, so they are willing to help their colleagues work.

*Of course, employee involvement is getting bigger. This is one of our efforts to maintain cohesiveness and fulfill our respective duties as staff or employees of Makassar city government officials.* (Interview, employee 3).

Another response from employees

*In work, we have to build synergy. It means that good cooperation must help friends as friends helped me. Then do not let us not build good cooperation and a sense of empathy, even though our work from home has shared duties regarding service to anyone.* (Interview, employee of 2)

Based on the results of the research that has been done, employee involvement is getting bigger during work from home. This is because their relationship is well established, giving rise to a sense of empathy, mutual support, and shared responsibility. The greater the employee involvement, the higher the performance results. Moreover, this is supported by Shuck et al. (2011), who say employee engagement strongly influences employee performance. The higher the employee engagement, the higher the employee performance (Letsoin & Ratnasari, 2020). Employees who perceive higher organizational support are more likely to reciprocate with more involvement in their work and the organization (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007).

## 3.3. Teamwork is Increasing

In interviews conducted with employees, they conveyed the extent of the impact of interpersonal communication while working from home. In addition to increasing employee involvement, another impact of interpersonal communication is increasing teamwork. Because their communication is effective, the relationship they establish is good. Furthermore, that makes employees more familiar with each other, increasing teamwork. For example, if one of them is having trouble, the other colleagues are willing to help even though it is not their job.

*In that relationship, we can complement each other with friends. For example, we share tasks. If I do not come, some friends can do my assignments. That is teamwork. My friend is not coming, but I can do his work, which means that by working from home, work is not interrupted. That is why we need a team to achieve the goal. In order for teamwork to increase, good communication is needed between colleagues.* (Interview, employee 2)

Based on the results of research that has been done, there is increasing teamwork. This is because their communication is good, so teamwork also increases. Teamwork improves when individuals trust one another. When someone works together, no matter how difficult the problem is, it will be quickly resolved because it is done together. The higher trust between employees, the better teamwork will impact employee performance. This result supported Ibrahim et al. (2021), which state that the better the implementation of teamwork by the company, the more employee performance will also increase. Wello and Novia (2021) argue that teamwork is a technique in which team members work together to achieve certain goals. Teamwork involves cooperative relationships, open communication, problem-solving, and consensus in decision-making. Teamwork can only be effective in an environment of honesty, trust, open communication, individual involvement, work pride, and commitment. A good relationship at work will help better teamwork, guided by a better understanding between employees. Interpersonal communication skills comprise building relationships, interacting positively with others, working cooperatively in teams, and empathizing with others.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the research results, the extent to which the impact of interpersonal communication during work from home can be seen from the good relations that exist between fellow employees, greater employee involvement, and increased teamwork. This is because their communication is effective, so it affects the performance they produce. The better employee communication, the better the performance results.

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