



## A Case Study of Communication Skills Implementation: The Effective Communication of School Teachers during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Edi Sumarwan<sup>1\*</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3266-4330>

Rapiadi<sup>2</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9183-9180>

Iin Avitasari<sup>3</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7994-8058>

Sidarta Adi Gautama<sup>4</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8600-2354>

Wistina Seneru<sup>5</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4787-0217>

<sup>12345</sup> Department of Buddhist Communication Studies, Jinarakkhita Buddhist College Studies, Lampung, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: Edi Sumarwan, [edi.sumarwan@stiab-jinarakkhita.ac.id](mailto:edi.sumarwan@stiab-jinarakkhita.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes effective communication in Buddhist Religious Education (BRE) learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at Bandar Agung Elementary School 4, Bandar Sribhawono Subdistrict. The study utilizes a qualitative approach and a case study method. Data is collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, which are then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model. The research findings indicate that teachers use WhatsApp and video calls as communication channels for distance learning. Teachers also involve parents or family members of the students as communication intermediaries. Interactive teaching methods such as questioning, discussions, and lectures are employed. The study also identifies communication barriers such as limited internet access and technological proficiency. Teachers address these barriers by directly communicating with students and parents through home visits. This research highlights the importance of effective communication in BRE learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the strategies used to overcome communication challenges.

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## Introduction

Communication is the process of exchanging messages between an individual and a group of people. M Griffin defines communication as "the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response" (Griffin, 1959, p. 6). Communication is a relational process aimed at creating and interpreting messages that generate a response. Communication serves various functions: informative, educational, persuasive, and entertainment. The informative function provides data, information, and facts, while the



educational function aims to educate or change the behavior of individuals or groups. The persuasive function aims to direct individuals to behave according to the communicator's intentions, and the entertainment function serves to entertain others (Akib & Perkasa, 2022, p. 5589). Therefore, communication is fundamental to human relationships, including in education.

Permana & Suhartini (2020) state that learning is a communicative process in which the teacher serves as the source of the message and the students as the message's recipients through a specific medium. Through this communication process, knowledge transfer occurs from the teacher, which can be categorized as scholarly communication. Scholarly communication is carried out to transfer knowledge within the scope of education. There are three aspects of effective communication in education: clarity of information, content, and context. The clarity aspect involves clear language and messages. The content aspect requires the communicator to master the material and its delivery, while the context aspect involves adjusting the material, language, information, and media to the students' environment (Wisman, 2017). Teachers should understand effective communication methods as the primary communicator or message giver. Furthermore, teachers are also expected to minimize and overcome communication barriers to achieve learning goals (Iswari, 2022).

During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the field of education has undergone significant changes, including in the learning process. As part of the national education system, Buddhist religious education is not exempt from the impact of this pandemic. Therefore, effective communication between teachers and students is necessary for distance learning. Teachers' commonly used communication model is no longer effective during this pandemic. The connection between communication and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic involves teachers and students and includes parents and media that can facilitate the smooth exchange of learning messages. This requires teachers to adapt to the communication patterns used in the learning process during the pandemic. A preliminary study shows that the implementation of Buddhist religious education (BRE) by teachers at SD Negeri 4 Bandar Agung relies heavily on the WhatsApp chat platform. This media is considered the most effective in bridging communication and learning processes between teachers and students and coordinating with the student's parents. The existence of a different communication model in the learning process compared to the standard conditions before the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked the researchers' interest in studying the communication model and communication barriers among the Buddhist Religious Education Teachers at Kecamatan Bandar Sribhawono.

The interest in this research theme is supported by previous studies, such as Iswari (2022) research entitled "Komunikasi Efektif Dalam Pembelajaran Daring Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19" which shows that effective communication includes informative, persuasive, and instructive communication in problem-solving teaching methods used by lecturer. Furthermore, Novita Maulidya Jalal et al. (2022) found that effective communication in learning occurs when there is task assistance provided via WhatsApp, the use of problem-solving methods in task completion to facilitate two-way communication, and the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication models. Tripambudi & Suparno (2022) also found a multidimensional communication model in online learning that is interactive, coordinated, and guided. These previous studies indicate the importance of effective communication in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the literature review, the researchers have not found any research focusing on effective communication in



Buddhist religious education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the researchers are interested in researching Effective Communication in Buddhist Religious Education during the Covid-19 Pandemic at SD Negeri 4 Bandar Agung.

## Method

The method used in this study is a case study with a qualitative approach. This research study applies a case study design that is considered appropriate because it involves careful observation of a phenomenon, offering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2018). This research was conducted at SD Negeri 4 Bandar Agung, Bandar Sribhawono District, East Lampung Regency, Lampung Province, Indonesia. The data collection techniques employed in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Two technical models of data analysis were utilized, namely, pre-field data analysis and on-field data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. Furthermore, this research tested the data's internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

## Findings

Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at SD N 04 Bandar Agung was implemented online (daring) and offline (luring). This was confirmed by several informants in the study, as follows: Informant 01-02, PAB Teacher, stated, "*The implementation at SD 4 Bandar Agung is that the system is offline with online*". The informant also said, "*If all this time in learning we use online methods*." Furthermore, informant 01-01, the School Principal, revealed, "*The implementation at SD 4 Bandar Agung is that the system is offline with online*."

Online learning was carried out by utilizing WhatsApp as the medium, where teachers provided instructions regarding the learning process. Teachers also explained that the learning process would continue through video calls once the students completed the given instructions. In the words of informants 01-05, a student's parent.

"Yes, yes..... so through that cellphone we can use Videocall, so if for example there are two children, yes connected directly two don't need to use google meet..... Whatsapp chat continued, then continued with Videocall..... Videocall make me from WA please open this page, well when they are ready to prepare a book, no video call".

In addition to online learning, occasionally, when conditions permitted, PAB teachers would visit the students' homes and provide direct explanations regarding the discussed materials. This was expressed by informant 01-05, a parent of a student, as follows:; "Kadang datang ke rumah menjelaskan materi yang diberikan".

Consistent with the above interview results, observation data also indicated that the second meeting of the third-grade learning sessions was conducted online through video calls using the WhatsApp application. Furthermore, comprehensive data from the semester lesson plan documents showed similar information, stating that pre-lesson activities and motivational discussions were carried out in WhatsApp groups. The learning process continued with teachers instructing the students to pray, assigning tasks, and having the students submit evidence of task completion, which was then collected.



## ***Effective Communication in Teacher-Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic***

Communication during learning in the Covid-19 pandemic is severely limited due to physical distancing measures. In this regard, teachers must exert extra effort in communicating with students. Informants 01-02, PAB Teachers, stated, "*Harus telaten mana tugas..... He'em ditelpon diilengke, nak tugasnya mana dikirim*". In this case, learning communication depends on and is limited to the internet or mobile phones.

Furthermore, when dealing with students below grade 3, teachers need intermediaries such as parents or older siblings of the students for communication. This statement is supported by interview findings from informants 01-02, PAB Teachers, as follows:

"If the class is small, I ask you later, and please be accompanied continuously; for example, the grade 1.2 student does not tell you to read, for example, give the task of recording pages later, please read the results on video, the results of reading accompanied by parents".

In addition, informant 01-03, a student, also revealed the online teaching method used, stating, "*He'emm, jadi apa materi itu difoto dulu, dikirim ke anak buka halaman sekian setelah itu di Videocal*". Teachers also provide direct explanations to students if there is something they do not understand by visiting their homes. This was expressed by informant 01-05, a parent of a student, who said, "*Kadang datang ke rumah menjelaskan materi yang diberikan*". In line with these findings, the teachers' lesson plan documents also include plans for collaboration between teachers and parents or siblings at home, where the teachers and students schedule their performance.

During remote learning, teachers prefer communication in the form of personal discussions. This was expressed as follows:

"For example... Lectures. For example, children are guided. If you don't have a printed book, children must summarize too, so we guide in this section; while explaining this part, please outline that."

"If you discuss it with your friend, Yo Karo Gurune. The teacher gives questions later to continue to keep the child connected."

Similarly, informant 01-04, a student parent, mentioned that "the teacher also uses question-and-answer and discussion methods "guru juga Using the question-and-answer method and discussion. Furthermore, the observation notes also indicate the teaching methods used by the teachers, including 1) the Lecture method to convey the story of Prince Siddhartha attending school, 2) Conveying discourse related to the material through storytelling, 3) the Question-and-answer method related to the conveyed discourse.

## ***Barriers and Solutions in Learning Communication During the Covid-19 Pandemic***

During every implementation of learning, there are often obstacles or barriers, one of which is communication barriers. Typically done face-to-face, learning has shifted to remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Communication that should have been done directly is hindered by distance and requires media assistance. The practices of learning communication are often restricted by the limited media resources available to students. This can be seen from the interview results with informants 01-02, PAB Teachers: "There



are children who can't be contacted at all." Furthermore, the informant also explained, "The child had no package.... then there is no cellphone..... Sometimes cellphones are brought by parents yo not iso also learn".

Similar issues were also found in the observation notes, where remote learning (PJJ) was hampered by unstable internet connections (students had to reconnect twice, experienced poor connections four times, and had intermittent call quality several times). Based on the interview and observation data, it can be concluded that the communication barriers faced by PAB teachers at SD N 4 Bandar Agung are students who cannot be contacted, lack of internet packages, unstable networks, and students not having mobile phones. One of the ways teachers overcome these barriers is by directly communicating with students and their parents by visiting their homes. The teacher's statement is as follows:

"Invited to the house, it's not difficult; why can't I be contacted if you don't come to Yowes' house? His parents are called..... painstakingly bell, and your duty is to be asked to go home. It's not very difficult; why can't you be contacted? Why can't you send tasks."

In line with this, the observation results conducted by the researcher also show that teachers directly contact parents of students through phone calls and WhatsApp messages if their child cannot be reached during the learning activities. Teachers also confirm the progress of their student's education through WhatsApp chats with parents.

## **Discussion**

Implementing Buddhist Religious Education teacher's learning in SD N 04 Bandar Agung during the Covid-19 pandemic is conducted online and offline. The teacher uses WhatsApp to give instructions and communicate with students. The students then carry out tasks and submit evidence of task completion through the same media. Online learning also involves communication through video calls to provide further explanations to students. The teacher also holds direct meetings with students at home to offer material answers.

### ***Effective Communication in Teacher's Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic***

Scholarly communication has four essential elements: the sender (teacher), message, communication channel, and receiver (students). In this case, the teacher acts as the message's sender, while the students are the receivers of the message. Learning messages are conveyed through communication channels consisting of WhatsApp and video calls. The teacher provides instructions through messages sent via WhatsApp, and direct interaction is conducted through video calls. However, in this case, the teacher needs intermediaries, especially for students below the 3rd grade of elementary school. The teacher requires the assistance of parents or family members of the students as communication intermediaries. Parents or older siblings help in carrying out instructions and monitoring task completion. The teacher also communicates with parents or family members of the students to ensure that learning messages are delivered effectively.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the teacher's communication strategies in learning are essential factors that influence learning effectiveness. We can refer to scholarly communication theories involving information delivery, student engagement, and handling communication barriers to understanding effective learning communication. Here is a





discussion based on practical academic communication theory regarding the research findings conducted in the field.

**1) Effective Use of Communication Media**

The research results show that Buddhist Religious Education teachers use online communication media like WhatsApp to provide instructions and conduct learning activities. This is in line with the research undertaken by Giantika (2020, p. 150) ), which shows that the use of the internet and social media is the appropriate choice in the pandemic that limits face-to-face interaction. WhatsApp allows teachers to provide instructions, motivate students, and direct video calls to explain the material. Referring to educational communication theory, selecting communication media suitable for the learning context and the student's abilities is essential in facilitating understanding and active participation.

**2) Involvement of Parents and Intermediaries**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, communication between teachers and students often requires the assistance of parents or intermediaries, especially for young students. In the research, Buddhist Religious Education teachers requested the help of parents or older siblings in guiding students below the 3rd grade of elementary school. This indicates the involvement of parents or intermediaries as facilitators of communication between teachers and students. According to practical scholarly communication theory, the participation of parents or intermediaries can help facilitate student understanding, bridge communication barriers, and increase the active involvement of students in learning.

**3) Interactive Teaching Methods**

Buddhist Religious Education teachers use interactive teaching methods such as questioning, discussions, and lectures. These methods allow students to actively participate in learning, ask questions, answer questions, and discuss with the teacher and their peers. In practical educational communication theory, the interaction between teachers and students is essential in building a more profound understanding. Students can communicate, share ideas, and make knowledge through interactive teaching methods.

Akdon mentioned that there are five effective communications in online learning, including setting online rules, creating an active online class, using verbal and non-verbal expressions in providing feedback, rewards, and punishments, connecting the material with daily life, and using videos or animations (Siregar & Akbar, 2020, p.209), referring to this view that the effective communication carried out by the Buddhist Religious Education teacher in SDN 4 Bandar Agung can be stated that the steps taken have fulfilled the elements of effective communication in online learning.

***Barriers and Solutions in Learning Communication During the Covid-19 Pandemic***

But, online learning allows teachers to transfer information in any condition. This convenience is supported by various applications that support sharing and discussion through chat or virtual face-to-face meetings. However, limitations in facilities, teachers' technological proficiency, students' and parents' technical ability, and the uneven distribution of internet access in certain areas inhibit this type of distance learning (Siregar & Akbar, 2020, p. 211). The research results also reveal communication barriers, such as students who cannot be contacted, lack of internet access, and unstable networks. The



limitation of parents' economic capacity to provide their children with smartphones and internet packages and the limited technological proficiency was also found in Sari's research Sari (2020, p. 52).

Furthermore, Emeilia & Muntazah (2021, p. 164) also found barriers in the limited access to information technology and media in implementing learning during the pandemic. One of the solutions to these problems is to collaborate with the parents of students, which is consistent with what the Buddhist Religious Education teacher in the school did. Strategies to overcome these issues include direct communication with students and their parents by visiting their homes. These actions demonstrate the teacher's efforts in addressing communication barriers by seeking alternative solutions to ensure students can still participate in learning. Ineffective educational communication theory, addressing communication barriers is an essential component in ensuring the smoothness of the learning process.

Overall, the above discussion shows that effective learning with communication in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in the school involves using effective communication media, the involvement of parents or intermediaries, interactive teaching methods, and addressing communication barriers. In practical communication theory, good communication between teachers and students is critical to achieving learning goals and ensuring optimal understanding. This communication is done in the form of both interpersonal and small-group communication. Despite communication barriers, teachers strive to overcome these problems, including involving parents or family members as communication intermediaries.

## **Conclusion**

Effective communication in teaching includes: First, the use of effective communication media, such as WhatsApp, to facilitate the delivery of information, motivate students, and enable direct interaction through video calls. Second, the involvement of parents or intermediaries helps bridge the communication gap between teachers and students, especially for young students. Third, interactive teaching methods like question-and-answer sessions, discussions, and lectures allow active student participation and foster a deeper understanding. Fourth, addressing communication barriers, such as internet connectivity issues or difficulties in reaching students, is done by seeking alternative solutions, such as visiting students' homes. Implementing these factors contributes to the effectiveness of Buddhist Religious Education teaching at school during the pandemic.

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