

Research article

Teachers' communication skills with families. A case study in rural schools in China

Habilidades comunicativas de los maestros con las familias. Estudio de caso en escuelas rurales de China

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Abstract

Introduction: The school-family relationship is a vital factor in improving student development and educational outcomes. Effective communication between home and school has a positive impact on students, communities and educators, particularly in rural areas where structural challenges are prevalent. This study investigates the impact of rural teachers' communication skills on school-family dynamics in northwest Shaanxi Province, China. **Method:** Quantitative approach was used to collect data from teachers and parents through questionnaires. **Results:** Parental-teachers' communication competence is strongly correlated with family involvement. **Discussion and conclusions:** The findings suggest that strengthening communication skills, particularly among teachers in rural areas, can significantly increase family involvement, leading to improved educational outcomes and more cohesive school-family relationships.

Keywords: home-school communication; teacher communicative competence; communicative barriers; rural education; primary education; family involvement; teacher training.

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Resumen

Introducción: La relación escuela-familia es un factor vital para mejorar el desarrollo y los resultados educativos de los niños y niñas. Una comunicación eficaz entre el hogar y la escuela repercute positivamente en los alumnos, las comunidades y los educadores, sobre todo en las zonas rurales, donde prevalecen algunos problemas estructurales. Este estudio investiga el impacto de las habilidades comunicativas de los profesores rurales sobre las dinámicas de relación escuela-familia y la expresividad de los estudiantes en el noroeste de la provincia de Shaanxi, China. **Metodología:** Se utilizó un enfoque de método cuantitativo para recopilar datos de profesores y progenitores mediante cuestionarios. **Resultados:** La competencia comunicativa de los profesores con las familias está fuertemente correlacionada con la implicación familiar. **Discusión y conclusiones:** Los hallazgos sugieren que fortalecer las habilidades de comunicación, particularmente entre los docentes en áreas rurales, puede aumentar significativamente la participación familiar, lo que conduce a mejores resultados educativos y relaciones escuela-familia más cohesivas.

Palabras clave: comunicación escuela-familia; competencias comunicativas del profesorado; barreras de comunicación; educación rural; educación primaria; implicación de las familias; formación del profesorado.

1. Introduction

Effective home-school communication is essential for improving the quality of education and promoting students' comprehensive development (Epstein, 2001; Stringer & Blaik Hourani, 2013). It is clear from numerous studies that successful communication relies on mutual understanding and reciprocity between teachers and parents (Garreta & Llevot, 2022; Andrés-Cabello & Giró, 2020; Deslandes et al., 2015; Schneider & Arnot, 2018). Teachers must facilitate this cooperation, encourage parental involvement in school activities and integrate families into the educational process (Bernad, 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Llevot & Bernad, 2021). While this has been extensively studied in urban areas, significant challenges remain in economically underdeveloped rural regions of China. Effective home-school communication is often hindered by socio-economic and cultural barriers in these areas (Huang & Lin, 2019).

Home-school communication is the exchange of information and the building of an educational consensus between families and schools, especially at the primary education level. Teachers are the central link in this process, as they are the ones who interact directly with parents (Epstein et al., 2018; Li & Wang, 2024). Teachers must communicate effectively with parents to share important information about students' academic progress and personal development. This fosters a supportive learning environment that contributes to students' overall development (Andrés-Cabello, 2023; Kim & Sheridan, 2015). However, inconsistencies in students' behavior at home and school, often referred to as the "dual behaviour phenomenon", demand better alignment between parents and educators in terms of educational content and methods (Bekkerman & Gilpin, 2014).

Despite growing research on parental involvement, there is still a gap in understanding how teachers can effectively guide and support parents in this communication process. Studies such as Chen (2024) and Xin (2024), prove that the quality of parental involvement in homework can significantly influence educational outcomes, depending on the type and quality of interaction. This highlights the need for further research to explore the specific mechanisms through which parental involvement affects student outcomes and to identify effective communication strategies for teachers.

This study addresses these gaps by examining common issues and strategies in teacher-parent communication within the context of home-school cooperation. This study compares and analyses the correlation between teachers' communication skills and parental involvement. A quantitative approach is employed to investigate the relationship between different dimensions of parental involvement and various communication indices of teachers. Two hypotheses are put forward for consideration:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers Parental-teachers are more willing to communicate with parents about their children's wellbeing

Hypothesis 2: Higher communication effectiveness indices for teachers are associated with increased levels of parental involvement.

1.1. Teacher-parent communication

Home-school communication represents a crucial avenue for fostering the holistic growth of students (Epstein, 2018; Llevot & Bernad, 2015). Scholars posit that the theory of overlapping spheres of influence has transformed our comprehension of the interrelationships between families, schools, and society in shaping children's development (Garbarino, 2017; Siegel, 2020). The theory was first posited by American scholar J. L. Epstein and his colleagues in 1995. The theory is based on the principles of ecological and social capital, and it underscores the necessity for the establishment of novel relationships between educational institutions, families, and communities in the United States (Epstein, 1995). Both internal and external structures are included in this theory. The internal structure emphasises the importance of harmonious interpersonal relationships within families, schools and communities. In contrast, the external structure emphasises cross-domain cooperation and interaction (Epstein et al., 2018). In accordance with this theory, the study posits that when teachers and parents engage in verbal communication, they should prioritise the 'students' as the central focus of these interactions, given that they are the primary beneficiaries of such exchanges.

Based on Habermas' theory of communicative action, the relationship between teachers and parents in the context of school-family communication should be characterised by mutual understanding and equality (Boyne, 1986; Habermas, 1984; Hirst, 2021; Kemmis, 1991). In addition, the information conveyed should be truthful and presented in an easily understandable manner in order to achieve effective communication (Habermas, 1984). Consequently, the oral communication component of this study was designed in accordance with Habermas' theory of communicative action to ensure that the principles of effective and meaningful interaction were adhered to.

1.1.1. Home-school communication – teachers' communication skills

Communication between teachers and parents is a two-way, fair and comprehensive educational activity (Rege & Almeida, 2013; Young, 2016). As defined by Adler et al. (1986), communication skills are "the ability to obtain mutually acceptable outcomes from others". Communication competence encompasses the capacity to comprehend language, articulate one's thoughts verbally, and engage in effective discourse (Light & McNaughton, 2014). From the perspective of communication trait theory, communication competence can be understood as an individual's capacity to engage in effective communication in a range of situations and contexts. In contrast, the situational communication theory (also known as the situational relational theory) posits that communication competence entails the assessment of the functions of a given situation and the subsequent adaptation of communication behaviour in

accordance with these functions (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Furthermore, the promotion of positive communication behaviours in different situations can facilitate the development of stable psychological traits, which in turn contribute to the overall development of children. In light of the above, Li (2018) posits that communication can be defined as the capacity to regulate one's own behaviour in diverse contexts and to achieve predetermined objectives through the deployment of suitable and efficacious communication strategies. This definition will be employed in the present study.

Conversely, the cognitive ability of teachers in home-school communication is also of significant importance. Teachers' self-perceptions, as well as their perceptions of parents and the communication situation, influence the outcomes of those interactions (Andrés-Cabello, 2023; Coakley et al., 2017; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Macià & Garreta, 2020). This encompasses the setting of communication goals with children, the selection of pertinent content, the prediction of parental perceptions, and the modification of communication behaviours in accordance with the prevailing circumstances (Baxendale et al., 2013). It is noteworthy that scholars have indicated in their research that teachers' communication skills in interactions with parents are manifested in their utilisation of professional knowledge to cultivate skills and educational insights to communicate effectively with parents (Symeou, 2012). These skills are important aspects that can encourage parents to actively participate in educational activities, thereby promoting the healthy and comprehensive development of children (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023, 2013).

1.2. Home-school communication – factors influencing parental involvement

The communication competence of primary school teachers is defined as their ability to communicate effectively with parents by using communication concepts, listening skills and expressive skills to promote children's development through cooperation with families. Deng Zixin (2010) investigated the characteristics of interpersonal communication competence of primary and secondary school teachers and identified three dimensions: skills, cognition and traits. His study, using a self-developed communication competence scale, found that teachers had a high level of interpersonal communication competence, with communication cognition being the most important, followed by communication traits and skills. The study also found significant differences in teachers' communication competence based on variables such as teaching experience, subject area, position, educational background, school location, school type and school size.

Epstein (1995) identified six types of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, decision making and community collaboration. These can be categorised as home-based involvement (parenting, home learning and community collaboration) and school-based involvement (communication, decision-making and volunteering). Fan (2001) expanded this framework to include four dimensions of parental involvement: parent-child communication, home monitoring, educational expectations for children, and school contact and participation. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), further refined the concept by dividing parental involvement into three dimensions: behavioural involvement, personal involvement and cognitive/intellectual involvement, emphasising elements such as listening skills, empathy, expressive skills and communication experience.

According to Reardon (2006), the structure of communication competence includes multiple elements such as empathy, social expectations, cognitive complexity, sensitivity to relational norms, situational knowledge, self-monitoring, mutual engagement, reciprocity management, behavioural flexibility, listening skills and social style. Dura (1983) divided communicative competence into several dimensions: communicative skills (expression and reception of

information), communicative cognition (self-awareness, awareness of others and situational cognition) and communicative tendencies (motivation, anxiety, trust and confidence). Gong (2021) extended this framework to include home-school communication competence, which he defined as the ability of teachers to interact with parents in ways that facilitate effective collaboration. He categorised these skills as cognitive, social and action-oriented. Further divided interpersonal communication competence into four dimensions: communication cognition, content, skills (listening, expression, empathy) and communication knowledge (Hobgood, 2002; Hargie, 2021).

Based on the above studies, this research categorises communication competence into four primary dimensions: communication concepts, listening skills, expressive skills and contextual cognition. Each primary dimension is further subdivided into secondary dimensions, which are detailed in the following sections.

2. Methodology

The study used quantitative techniques. The study compared and analysed the correlation between teachers' communication skills and parental involvement. From March to June 2024, questionnaires were distributed in five schools. Of these, 996 were from parents (fathers and mothers) and 180 from teachers (male and female).

Great care was taken to ensure that ethical considerations were taken into account. Their personal data were protected, and the confidentiality of the information they provided was maintained. This study was conducted according to the ethical standards set out in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). In this way, confidentiality and respect for the participants' privacy were ensured, in accordance with all current ethical and legal guidelines.

Of the teachers surveyed, 180 were considered valid questionnaires. Most of the teachers had a Bachelor's degree or higher and 100 of the respondents represented 30.00% of the sample. There were relatively few male teachers, only 50 respondents, representing 16.67% of the total.

There was a total of 996 parents surveyed, of whom 86.84%, or 865, were mothers. Although intergenerational education may exist, it is not the subject of this study. That is why we made it clear at the beginning that only one parent should fill in the questionnaire. The group of parents with the highest level of education had a bachelor's degree or less, with a total of 326 people, or 30.55% of the total number of respondents. In terms of occupation, 60.54% of the parents were officials or employees, of whom 603 or more had a job. The number of children in the family was fairly evenly distributed, with 45.48 per cent of families having one child and 46.49 per cent having two or more children. In terms of monthly household income, 49.13% of respondents reported an income between 30,001 and 69,000 yuan.

The survey addressed basic aspects of parental involvement and attempted to assess the ability of primary school teachers to facilitate communication between home and school. The teacher questionnaire was constructed based on Harris' theory of behavior and modified according to existing research on teachers' communication skills and abilities. The questionnaire was divided into six sections: a basic information section and four additional sections (see Table 1).

Table 1.*Teachers' communication ability questionnaire*

Primary latitude	Secondary latitude	Question number
Communication Concepts	Self-Awareness	4, 5
	Awareness of Parents	6, 7
	Communication Methods/Frequency/Willingness	8, 9
Listening Skills	Understanding Parents' Current Concerns	10, 11
	Ability to Handle Parents' Emotional States	12, 13, 14
	Awareness of Communication Context	15
	Ability to Manage Own Emotional State	16, 17
Expression Skills	Professional Knowledge of Communication	18, 19, 20
	Application of Communication Principles	20, 21
Contextual Cognition	The situation of students (children's performance, mental health, life)	22, 23, 24
	Home education (Number of times children take the initiative at home, share their daily lives, etc.)	25, 26, 27
	Awareness of Communication Context	28, 29

*The last part includes an open-ended question that give the opportunity to provide suggestions or comments on potential barriers to effective home-school communication (question 30).

Source: Own elaboration.

The following table uses a categorisation system that groups questionnaire items according to their association with specific project groups, content groups and corresponding question numbers. The table draws attention to the different dimensions of parental involvement, including 'parenting' (monitoring and providing resources), 'learning at home' (supporting learning goals), 'volunteering' (attending school events), 'communicating' (interacting with teachers) and 'community involvement' (participating in community activities). The aim of each group is to identify the specific impact of parental involvement on children's educational outcomes. See Table 2 for the corresponding question number.

Table 2.*Teachers' communication ability questionnaire*

	Questions	No. of items
Parenting	11, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	10
Learning at Home	11, 12, 13, 14, 15	5
Volunteering	3, 5, 8, 10, 15*, 16, 18, 20	8
Communication	21, 22, 23, 24, 25	5
Community Involvement	26, 27, 28, 29, 30	5

Source: Own elaboration.

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS 29. Questionnaire reliability analysis: Cronbach's coefficient is a statistical indicator (Emerson, 2019). In general, if the coefficient is greater than 0.7, the measurement tool is considered reliable and stable and can be used for further analysis. The reliability coefficient of this measurement tool is 0.856 for the teacher questionnaire and 0.843 for the parent questionnaire, which indicates that the questionnaire has relatively ideal homogeneity reliability. According to the relevant reliability requirements in questionnaire

construction, these values indicate that the questionnaire has relatively ideal homogeneity reliability. The overall reliability coefficient of this questionnaire is shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Results of the reliability analysis of the questionnaires 'Teachers' communication skills' and 'Parent involvement'

Cronbach's Alpha	Teachers	Parents
Based on different school	0.856	0.843

Source: Own elaboration.

The concluding section comprises open-ended questions, which afford parents the opportunity to proffer suggestions or opinions regarding potential impediments to efficacious home-school communication. Each question is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The responses were subjected to statistical analysis in order to ascertain the frequency distribution and percentage of responses for each item from rural primary school teachers.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test are used to assess the suitability of data for factor analysis (see Table 4). The validity of a questionnaire is determined by its capacity to accurately assess the psychological or behavioral characteristics that the test is designed to measure. The items included in this questionnaire have been derived from questionnaires previously administered in other countries. The content is translated and subsequently subjected to a test to ascertain its suitability for local rural areas. Consequently, following consultation with the research team and the implementation of the survey on 10 local parents, the KMO test values for the data presented in Figure 4 were 0.878 and 0.88. The Bartlett sphericity test yielded a significance value of $p < 0.01$, indicating that the questionnaire can be used for factor analysis. Furthermore, the researcher conducted factor analysis on the teacher competency examination and the parent participation questionnaire and found that the factor loads and commonality met the requisite standards.

Table 4.

KMO and Bartlett tests

KMO	Value	Teachers	Parental
	Degrees of Freedom	0.878	0.88
	Number	180	863
Significance		0.000	0.000

Source: Own elaboration.

3. Results

The questionnaire had a section on demographic data (basic information section).

3.1. The total scores for each teachers' communication skills index

Table 5 shows the current situation of teachers' communication skills and the scores of the five schools on each dimension. An analysis of variance was performed on the data. The concept of teachers' communication received the highest score in the table ($M = 4.33$), indicating that

they have a strong willingness to communicate, and two of the schools scored higher. However, teachers' expression skills ($M = 2,77$) and listening skills ($M = 2,01$) scored the lowest, significantly lower than the other skills. This suggests that although teachers recognise the importance of their willingness to communicate, their listening and expression skills need to be improved.

The comparative results also show that the overall and sub-item scores for situational awareness are average. Teachers in Schools A and B, located in more economically developed areas, have higher competence scores. In particular, teachers in these schools score slightly higher than teachers in the other three schools on communication concepts and listening skills.

Table 5.

Comparison of differences in teachers' communication skills across five schools

Primary latitude	A		B		C		D		E	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Communication Concepts	4,33	0,50	4,31	0,50	3,31	0,45	3,28	0,46	3,27	0,41
Listening Skills	3,13	0,36	3,22	0,32	3,01	0,29	3,11	0,27	2,77	0,33
Expression Skills	3,01	0,26	3,31	0,29	2,01	0,22	3,01	0,25	3,01	0,21
Contextual Cognition	3,56	0,61	3,53	0,61	2,79	0,57	3,56	0,55	3,17	0,54

Source: Own elaboration.

A difference analysis was carried out on the data. According to Table 6, differences in teachers' roles had a significant impact on communication skills, especially in terms of 'expressiveness' and 'situational awareness'. An analysis of the means shows that principals and school administrators scored higher than subject teachers in these areas.

In terms of 'communication competence', 'communication perception' and 'communication concept', the performance patterns of all roles were similar and there were no significant differences. However, it is worth noting that the scores of class teachers were consistently higher in all aspects, highlighting their important role in parent-teacher communication.

The F-value is a statistical measure used to compare the proportions of different teacher identity groups. A larger F-value indicates a greater discrepancy between groups compared to the divergence within groups, meaning that the distinction between different groups is more pronounced. In the dimension 'Teachers' group concept of communication', the average scores of class teachers and administrators were higher, while those of teachers were slightly lower. The P-value is a probability value used to assess the degree of agreement between the collected data and the original hypothesis. In the dimension 'awareness of the communication situation', the scores of class teachers were higher than those of subject teachers and administrators. This shows that class teachers are better than other ordinary teachers in using different communication methods and that this 'identity' is more effective in communicating with parents.

Table 6.

Primary teachers' differing roles in verbal communication with parents

Primary latitude	Mean & Standard			F	P
	Normal teacher	Parental teacher	Leader of school		
Communication Concepts	4,03±0,72	4,09±0,74	4,11±0,55	0,171	0,843
Listening Skills	4,23±0,53	4,37±0,48	4,27±0,32	15,953	0,000**
Expression Skills	2,99±0,15	3,26±0,22	3,26±0,25	2,002	0,138
Contextual Cognition	2,95±0,33	3,29±0,30	3,21±0,41	1,951	0,145

*normal teacher (n=130), parental-teacher (n=45), leader of school (n=5).

Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. Parental involvement index relationship

Based on the data in Table 7, various aspects of communication among teachers in the five schools were analysed, with a focus on their effectiveness in each dimension. Overall, the concept of communication received the highest average score ($M = 4,33$), reflecting the teachers' strong willingness to engage in dialogue with parents. Located in a slightly better-off area; Schools A and B performed particularly well in this dimension, indicating that they actively promote communication and cooperation with parents. This shows that the teachers in these schools attach great importance to the value of communication and are more inclined to actively interact with families.

However, despite their willingness to communicate, the scores for expression skills ($M = 2,77$) and listening skills ($M = 2,01$) were significantly lower, indicating that these aspects need to be improved. The lower scores in these areas suggest that although teachers are willing to communicate, they may lack the necessary skills to effectively convey information and actively listen to parents. This discrepancy suggests that teachers want to communicate, but lack the necessary skills to effectively communicate and actively listen to parents.

The analysis also revealed that all schools scored average on situational awareness, indicating that teachers have a moderate understanding of the broader context of communication. Teachers in Schools A and B scored slightly higher on this dimension than Schools C, D and E. This suggests that teachers in economically developed areas may have better access to resources and training opportunities, which improves their communication skills.

In contrast, schools C, D and E, which are located in less developed areas, scored lower overall on all dimensions, especially in listening and expressive skills. This indicates a need for targeted professional development programmes to improve teachers' communication skills, especially those in rural or less developed areas, to ensure that parents and teachers can work together effectively to support students' development.

The analysis of data on parental involvement in five rural schools revealed significant differences in performance across different dimensions and schools. Schools A and B, located in an area of relatively high economic development, showed the highest performance across several dimensions. Concerning communication, School A achieved the highest score in the communication dimension ($M=4,30$), indicating a high level of parent-teacher interaction and implementation of effective communication strategies. This suggests that the school has

implemented an effective home-school communication system that is conducive to student development.

In terms of learning at home, School A also shows the highest level of involvement in this area (M=4,0), indicating that parents are actively involved in their children's education by providing learning resources and support. This is of paramount importance in improving student achievement and engagement.

In terms of Community Engagement, School B demonstrated a remarkable capacity for community engagement, as indicated by a mean score of 3,7. This suggests that parents in this school are actively involved in community activities and school governance. Such engagement fosters a collaborative environment that is conducive to the development of the entire school community. The role of volunteering and parenting in this context is as follows: School A demonstrated exemplary performance in both volunteering (M=3,7) and parenting (M=3,8), indicating that parents are highly involved in school activities and have a balanced approach to parenting. It is noteworthy that School E scored the lowest across all dimensions, particularly in communication (M=2,34) and community involvement (M=2,28). This suggests that strategies for involving parents and support systems for schools in less developed areas need to be improved.

In general, Schools A and B performed better in fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment. Conversely, Schools C, D and E require targeted interventions to improve parental engagement and student learning outcomes.

Table 7.

Index of the involvement of parents in the different schools

SCHOOL	A		B		C		D		E	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Parenting	3.80	4.30	1.74	4.00	1.74	3.89	1.22	4.17	1.34	4.17
Learning at Home	2.56	4.67	2.18	4.23	2.18	3.11	2.45	4.67	2.21	4.67
Volunteering	2.24	4.62	2.15	4.38	2.14	4.45	2.23	4.62	2.34	4.62
Communication	3.70	5.44	3.22	5.54	3.07	4.23	3.21	5.44	2.28	5.44

Source: Own elaboration.

3.3. Barriers between teachers' communication skills and parent participation

In addition, a summary of the text in question 30 can be used to identify the high-frequency words in teachers' comments and parents' comments.

Firstly, teachers believe that parents are “busy”, “have little time”, “have a lot to do” and “have grandparents to help”, followed by “some parents are not well educated and communication is difficult” and “parents' ideas about education are very different from my own”. This shows that, from the teachers' point of view, parents' busy work schedules and low quality are currently the biggest obstacles to verbal communication between teachers and parents.

Secondly, the open-ended questions in the parents' questionnaire show that the most common barriers to verbal communication between teachers and parents are “lack of experience in communicating with teachers and not knowing where to start” and “being busy with work and having little time”. This shows that, from the parents' point of view, the communication channels are not open and, secondly, that parents' busy work schedules are currently the main obstacle to communication between home and school.

4. Discussion

Teachers' ability to communicate does not reflect their ability to listen and express themselves. The frequency of parents' participation also affects the teachers' willingness to communicate. Therefore, listening and expressive skills are two-way and these skills cannot be formed without some training and time.

The tenets of interactionist action theory posit that relationships should be founded upon principles of mutual respect and that both parties involved should be treated as equals (Hals, 1986). The study, which focused on primary schools in rural areas, revealed that teachers generally recognise the importance of communicating with parents and the significant impact that communication between schools and families has on pupils' development. However, many teachers lack the awareness to initiate communication with parents and often do not perceive parents as equal partners in education. Some teachers tend to exclude parents from educational management, assessment and school planning.

In order to enhance communication between the home and the school, teachers must proactively interact with parents, disseminating scientific pedagogical principles and techniques. The content of teachers' communication with parents reflects both their relationship and their shared educational philosophy (Andrés-Cabello & Giró, 2020; Garreta & Llevot, 2022; Rege & Almeida, 2013). It is imperative that the quality and depth of this dialogue be enhanced in order to foster harmonious home-school relations and promote the comprehensive development of students (Deslandes, 2019; Epstein et al., 2018). Teachers must comprehend the requirements of pupils and parents and advance the holistic growth of children, not merely their academic achievements. This encompasses the encouragement of parents to pay attention to the overall health and wellbeing of their children, including their emotional and social development. Conversely, educators must also facilitate the cultivation of students' self-awareness, psychological resilience, and moral character. Furthermore, educators should assist parents in fostering positive study habits and life skills in their children.

Additionally, they can facilitate the accurate and timely collection of feedback and thoughts from the communication object. The advancement of communication between educators and parents requires the expansion of communication channels. In the context of 'Internet Plus', it is imperative that home-school communication exploits network media to devise innovative approaches to verbal communication between teachers and parents. Moreover, it is essential to consider the use of a range of communication strategies for varying contexts (Llevot & Garreta, 2024).

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers' communication skills play a key role in promoting effective home-school collaboration. According to the research, when examining teachers' communication skills, particular attention is paid to their awareness, content, methods, techniques and skills in oral communication with parents (Symeou, 2012). Although teachers generally demonstrated a strong willingness to communicate, their 'listening' and 'expressing' skills need to be significantly improved. These skills are essential to promote more effective dialogue with parents and to overcome potential communication barriers. The study revealed significant differences in communication skills between teachers in different schools, particularly in the more economically developed areas (Schools A and B),

where teachers scored higher in terms of communication skills and parent engagement. In contrast, teachers in the less economically developed areas (Schools C, D and E) scored lower in terms of communication, suggesting a need for targeted professional development to strengthen communication practices in these areas. This supports Hypothesis 1: Class teachers are more willing to communicate with parents about their children.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher had a significant impact on the success of communication. For example, class teachers consistently scored higher on all dimensions in this study, suggesting that they play a key role in maintaining good relationships with parents. Principals and administrators also demonstrated stronger skills in 'situational awareness' and 'expression', highlighting the importance of leadership in promoting effective communication in schools. The study also identified several barriers to communication from both teachers' and parents' perspectives. Teachers identified parents' 'busy schedules' and lower levels of education as the main barriers, while parents identified 'lack of experience' and time constraints as the main challenges. These findings highlight the need for schools to develop strategies to overcome these barriers and to establish more accessible and effective communication channels. Hypothesis 2 was supported: the higher the teacher communication efficacy index, the higher the parent engagement.

In conclusion, improving teachers' communication skills, particularly their ability to 'listen' and 'express', while addressing the barriers faced by teachers and parents, is essential to strengthening home-school collaboration. Schools in less developed areas would benefit from targeted interventions to strengthen communication practices, and professional development programmes should focus on providing teachers with the tools they need to engage parents effectively.

6. Limitation

Due to the characteristics of the primary schools selected for this study, questionnaires were administered through the online platform. However, the short duration of the survey responses may not fully capture the complexities of the situation, and the response rate from parents was relatively low. The researcher adapted the questionnaire based on the Communication Skill and Parents Investments Survey, which had previously been developed. During the survey and interviews, it was evident that both teachers and parents expressed mutual dissatisfaction. Improving home-school communication is a long-term process that cannot be achieved overnight. Although the researcher put forth strategies to improve teacher-parent verbal communication, the recommendations lacked specificity with regard to different groups of teachers.

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