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Principals' interpersonal communication patterns in implementing academic supervision of beginning teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the principal's interpersonal communication patterns in implementing academic supervision for novice teachers at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang, recognizing that supervision quality extends beyond formal procedures. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the principal's interpersonal communication patterns were predominantly open, empathetic, supportive, positive, and egalitarian. During the pre-conference stage, the principal-built novice teachers' psychological readiness through friendly approaches and collaborative determination of supervision focus. In the observation stage, proper supervisory ethics and calming nonverbal communication were maintained. During the post-conference stage, feedback was delivered reflectively, dialogically, and constructively. These patterns significantly enhanced novice teachers' confidence, comfort, and performance, particularly in lesson planning and classroom instruction. This study offers a contextualized model of interpersonal communication in supervision specific to novice teachers in rural elementary schools, an area rarely examined qualitatively. Findings emphasize that principals must prioritize relational communication skills alongside technical supervisory competencies to effectively support early-career teachers. This research contributes empirical evidence that effective academic supervision is fundamentally determined by the quality of interpersonal communication, providing actionable guidance for school leaders and teacher training institutions in designing supervision frameworks that are both procedurally sound and relationally sensitive.

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Introduction

Basic education is the primary foundation for developing quality human resources, where the principal's role as an academic leader is crucial to the success of the learning process. At the public elementary school level, particularly at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang, the main challenge lies in the performance of novice teachers, who often experience difficulties adapting, from lesson planning to evaluating student learning outcomes. Academic supervision by the principal is designed to address these issues through planning, implementation, and follow-up stages, aimed at improving pedagogical competence and teacher professionalism (Sobirin et al., 2023). The principal's interpersonal communication patterns play a central role in the effectiveness of such supervision, as

empathetic and assertive communication can build trust, encourage teacher openness to feedback, and motivate self-improvement. Research shows that academic supervision strategies using an interpersonal communication approach successfully enhance teacher professionalism by involving active collaboration between parties. Furthermore, effective communication between the principal and novice teachers creates a harmonious work environment, which significantly impacts the quality of learning in elementary schools (Sofia et al., 2023).

Beginning elementary school teachers often face obstacles such as lack of experience in classroom management, curriculum understanding, and adaptation to school culture, which impact overall teaching performance. In the Indonesian context, principals' academic supervision has been shown to significantly improve elementary school teacher performance, with a correlation of up to 75.7% in a study at Bakti Seraga 1 Elementary School. However, without appropriate interpersonal communication patterns, supervision tends to fail due to teacher resistance or lack of motivation (Sofia et al., 2023). Academic supervision is not merely supervision but also collaborative guidance involving empathy and support from the principal to address the challenges faced by novice teachers. Similarly, at an elementary school in Bandung Regency, the implementation of supervision with clear communication resulted in a gradual increase in teacher competency (Rahman & Masmur, 2026).

This effectiveness is also evident in the partial relationship between principal supervision and interpersonal communication, which simultaneously impacts teacher performance. Other research indicates that transparent principal communication and listening to novice teachers' feedback are key supporting factors in achieving educational goals (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). The quality of national education remains a strategic issue that continues to be criticized because Indonesian students' learning outcomes have not consistently aligned with the demands of 21st-century competencies and the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Various policy evaluations confirm that the low quality of education is not solely due to limited facilities but is largely determined by the capacity of teachers as key actors who translate the curriculum into classroom learning practices (Widyasari, 2025). In the era of the Independent Curriculum, expectations for teachers are increasingly high: teachers are required to be able to design differentiated learning, facilitate learner-centered learning, integrate continuous formative assessment, and foster the Pancasila Student Profile (Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2023).

This means that the quality of national education is ultimately rooted in the quality of teacher practice in the classroom, so the greatest investment in improving education quality must be directed towards teacher professional development, including in the early phase of their careers. Within this framework, novice teachers occupy a paradoxical position: on the one hand, they are the "new generation" of educators expected to bring enthusiasm and innovation; on the other, they are the most professionally and psychosocially vulnerable group. Various studies show that novice teachers often experience "reality shock" upon entering the workforce, encountering a sharp gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired in college and the complexity of classroom learning practices (Dinata et al., 2025). They frequently face difficulties managing heterogeneous classes, understanding student characteristics, modifying learning methods to suit local contexts, and utilizing learning technology appropriately (Nurfajria et al., 2024). Other research reveals that the early years of teaching can be a stressful period, with novice elementary school teachers feeling trapped between administrative burdens, academic demands, and parental expectations, while support and coaching structures are often unsystematic (Rorimpandey, 2020).

If left unchecked, novice teachers have the potential to develop minimalist, defensive, and less reflective work patterns, making it difficult for their performance to develop toward the desired professionalism. The situation becomes even more complex when novice teachers must adapt to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Mapping the pedagogical competencies of novice teachers in several elementary schools shows that their abilities in formulating learning objectives oriented toward competency achievement, designing differentiated learning, and developing authentic assessments are still in the developing and unstable category (Appiah-Odame, 2025). The range of variation in mastery of differentiation strategies, which only reaches 15-45 percent, and the inconsistent use of formative assessments indicate the need for intensive support so that novice teachers do not simply "comply" with the curriculum administratively but truly understand and internalize the learning philosophy it promotes (Westwood, 2001). At this point, structured, humanistic, and sustainable professional development becomes an urgent need, not an optional option. Academic supervision is a development activity that provides encouragement (motivation), guidance, and direction from the principal to all teachers to improve their competence in carrying out the learning process for quality academic implementation.

This model typically operates through a series of stages: a pre-conference meeting to clarify objectives, agree on the focus of observations, and build teacher psychological readiness; learning observations using agreed-upon instruments; and a feedback meeting to interpret data, provide constructive feedback, and formulate a joint improvement plan (Hanafiah et al., 2022). Action research in various elementary schools shows that when the

academic supervision cycle is implemented consistently, there is a significant improvement in teachers' abilities in developing learning materials, managing classroom interactions, and implementing active learning models. This is reflected in an increase in observation scores and performance indicators from adequate to good and excellent. However, the essence of academic supervision lies not solely in the structure of its stages, but rather in the quality of the relationships and communication formed within it. Without healthy interpersonal communication, academic supervision can easily become a mere formal, report-oriented procedure, rather than a meaningful professional learning process. Studies of principal supervision have shown that a harsh, judgemental, and distant approach to supervision can actually lead to resistance, anxiety, and defensive behaviour from teachers, especially novice teachers who are still sensitive to assessment (Tisno, 2024).

Conversely, when academic supervision is framed as an egalitarian professional conversation, in which principals and teachers jointly analyse instructional practices with a spirit of learning, teachers feel safer expressing difficulties, accepting criticism, and trying new strategies (Dzulfah, 2022). In this context, the principal's interpersonal communication is at the heart of academic supervision. Interpersonal communication theory emphasizes that effective interactions are characterized by openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality, all of which are highly relevant in the principal-teacher relationship (Bylund et al., 2012). When the principal demonstrates openness, beginning teachers feel valued as partners whose opinions are worthy of being heard, not simply objects of assessment. Empathy enables the principal to understand that beginning teachers' mistakes are often part of the learning process, not evidence of permanent incompetence. A supportive and positive attitude helps balance corrective feedback with reinforcement of existing strengths so that beginning teachers do not feel their professional identity is being "attacked". This relational equality, despite the principal's structurally authoritative position, is reflected in a communication style that does not condescend but instead invites teachers to speak up, ask questions, and reflect on their own practice.

Numerous empirical studies support the strategic role of principals' interpersonal communication in shaping teacher performance. Studies at various levels of education indicate that the quality of principals' interpersonal communication is positively correlated with teacher performance, motivation, and job satisfaction. Principals who are able to communicate in a dialogic, transparent, and supportive manner tend to foster a higher level of work commitment and willingness to learn among teachers (Ayumi & Nasution, 2025). In the context of supervision, research on therapeutic communication approaches confirms that principals who combine empathy, active listening skills, and non-judgmental feedback are able to create a supervisory environment that teachers perceive as a "safe" space for reflection and experimentation, rather than simply a forum for evaluating mistakes (Julia et al., 2024). For novice teachers, the quality of this communication determines whether academic supervision is experienced as an empowering mentoring process or as a threat to be avoided. When the focus is on the local context, this complexity becomes even more concrete. Muara Padang District in Banyuasin Regency is characterized by rural areas and access to educational infrastructure that is not always as ideal as in urban areas.

Education reference data (Sumaryanta et al., 2019) shows that in this region, several public elementary schools are grouped into rayons (clusters) as coordinating units for development and quality improvement. Muara Padang Public Elementary School 12, as part of this rayon structure, operates within a diverse socioeconomic context, with students' families relying heavily on agriculture and informal employment, which influences their motivation to learn and parental support for their children's education. In these circumstances, novice teachers face not only the demands of the curriculum and professional standards but also the realities on the ground: limited resources, varying student base abilities, and a learning culture that does not fully support active learning. This places the principal as a key figure, not only managing administration but also acting as an instructional leader who must be able to closely guide novice teachers through academic supervision. Here, the principal's interpersonal communication patterns at each stage of academic supervision, from inviting teachers to pre-conferences and conveying observation findings to encouraging teachers to develop follow-up plans, will significantly determine whether novice teachers feel prepared and supported, or stressed and alone.

To date, research specifically integrating these three elements, novice teachers, academic supervision, and the principal's interpersonal communication patterns in the context of SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang, is relatively limited (Szeto & Cheng, 2018). Most studies focus primarily on the effectiveness of academic supervision on improving teacher competency in general or explain the influence of the principal's interpersonal communication on teacher performance from a quantitative perspective, lacking a deeper understanding of novice teachers' subjective experiences in the field. A deeper understanding of how novice teachers experience, interpret, and respond to the principal's communication patterns during academic supervision is crucial for designing a coaching model that is more sensitive to their psychological and professional needs. Based on this, qualitative research focusing on the interpersonal communication patterns of the principal in the implementation of academic supervision at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang is highly relevant and urgent. This research is expected

to be able to reveal in depth the dynamics of interactions, communication strategies, and meanings constructed in the relationship between the principal and novice teachers during the academic supervision process. The research findings are expected not only to enrich the academic discourse on supervision and interpersonal communication in educational management but also to become a practical reference for principals and policymakers in designing training patterns for novice teachers that are more humanistic, contextual, and oriented towards improving the quality of basic education in the Muara Padang area and similar areas.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study to gain a deeper understanding of the principal's interpersonal communication patterns in implementing academic supervision for novice teachers. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research seeks to explore, understand, and interpret the phenomenon of interpersonal communication and academic supervision in its natural context at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang. In this research context, the case study allows the researcher to comprehensively explore how the principal's interpersonal communication patterns are applied in academic supervision, the factors that influence them, and their impact on improving novice teacher performance. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as a key instrument (human instrument) whose function is to determine the research focus, select informants as data sources, collect data, assess data quality, analyze data, interpret data, and draw conclusions from the findings. The researcher's presence at the research site is crucial and necessary for direct observation of the phenomena occurring in the field.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang, Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province. Geographically, Muara Padang District has 22 public elementary schools spread across various villages/sub-districts. Muara Padang 12 Public Elementary School was chosen as the focus of this research because it is a strategic and representative cluster for describing academic supervision practices at the elementary school level. The study was conducted over a four-month period. The research focused on the principal's interpersonal communication patterns in implementing academic supervision for novice teachers at Muara Padang 12 Public Elementary School. The main focus of the study was how the principal built constructive, open, and empathetic communication relationships during the academic supervision process. The researcher focused on the verbal and nonverbal interactions between the principal and novice teachers, including how the principal provided feedback, directed, and guided teachers in improving classroom teaching practices. In this context, academic supervision is understood as a systematic and continuous professional development process, not simply an administrative assessment.

The research focused on how effective interpersonal communication can bridge the gap between supervision objectives and improving novice teachers' competencies. The informants in this study were selected purposively, based on their understanding of, experience with, and direct involvement in academic supervision activities in their respective schools. Informants included the principal, novice teachers, senior teachers, school operators, administrative staff, and school supervisors. A total of 10 informants were recruited from SDN 12 Muara Padang. The number of informants also took into account the principle of data saturation, which is the condition when newly obtained data no longer provides meaningful additional information or sufficient data has been achieved to answer the research questions. The research was conducted through three main stages: pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, and data analysis and reporting. Primary data sources were obtained directly from informants through direct interaction between the researcher and the research subjects, while secondary data sources were obtained from documents, instruments, lesson plans, and academic supervision notes. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation.

Data validity techniques applied four testing criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of three main components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Results and Discussions

Interpersonal Communication Patterns of School Principals in the Pre-Conference Stage

The pre-conference phase of the academic supervision cycle is the foundation that determines the direction of the entire coaching process. Research at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang shows that the principal consciously fosters an open and supportive communication climate from the first moment of meeting with novice teachers. The first step is always to welcome novice teachers in a relaxed, informal atmosphere and engage in light conversation before delving into the core agenda. This is as expressed by the principal (KS-01): "I greet them with a friendly smile in a relaxed atmosphere so that the atmosphere doesn't feel stiff or too formal, and I engage

in light conversation about their daily teaching experiences before delving into the core topics of supervision." This strategic choice indicates that the principal understands the need to reduce the psychological tension of novice teachers before engaging in substantive conversations, a step known in interpersonal communication theory as the rapport-building phase or the development of relational harmony. Alfiyanto et al. (2021) emphasize that effective interpersonal communication requires the presence of a warm and egalitarian relational climate as a prerequisite for substantive messages to be optimally received and processed by the recipient.

Openness is the first and most crucial dimension of interpersonal communication. In the context of this study, openness is manifested through the principal's explicit explanation of the true purpose of supervision. KS-01 asserted: "What I do to build teacher psychological readiness is to reaffirm that supervision is a means of professional development, not an arena for finding fault." This statement has a significant cognitive impact on novice teachers because it shifts their interpretive framework of supervision from an evaluative threat to a learning opportunity. Novice teacher GP-01 confirmed: "He gave me encouraging words that this supervision is not about finding fault." Meanwhile, GP-04 stated something similar: "Initially, I was curious about what shortcomings I might have seen, but his explanation made me feel calmer." This openness of communication is in line with the concept of openness in DeVito's interpersonal communication theory as cited by Harapan & Hendrowati (2024), which emphasises that openness includes the supervisor's willingness to share information honestly and responsibly and to respond authentically to teachers' conditions.

Empathy in interpersonal communication is more than just the ability to understand another person's feelings; it is the capacity to transform that understanding into a communicative response that validates the other's experience as legitimate and meaningful. The principal (KS-01) used the strategy of sharing personal experiences to build empathy: "I shared a story about my personal experience when I was first supervised to build empathy and common ground." This strategy is known in communication theory as strategic self-disclosure, a planned self-disclosure that builds shared experiences and reduces hierarchical distance. Novice teacher GP-03 confirmed the effectiveness of this approach: "He shared his personal experience when he was first supervised. It made me feel less alone in my nervousness". Tisno (2024) emphasized that rigid and distant academic supervision actually creates resistance and anxiety in novice teachers who are still highly sensitive to assessment, whereas supervision that fosters empathy creates a safe space for teachers to reflect and experiment. When the principal positions himself as someone who has experienced the same thing, he indirectly conveys the message that novice teachers' anxiety is a human response and can be overcome together, not a weakness to be hidden.

Supportiveness in academic supervision is manifested through messages that explicitly and implicitly communicate that the principal is there to help, not to judge. Novice teacher GP-02 stated: "He assured me that it is natural for every novice teacher to make mistakes." This normalisation of mistakes has a significant psychological impact because it reduces the fear of failure, which is a major barrier to novice teachers' openness to supervision. Meanwhile, GS-01, a senior teacher who acts as a mentor coordinator, confirmed from his observational perspective: "The principal does not immediately check the administration rigidly but instead opens up a space for warm verbal discussions to reduce the emotional anxiety that novice teachers usually experience." Harapan & Hendrowati (2024) emphasised that effective academic supervision requires the presence of a collegial climate in which the principal not only conveys technical information but also actively creates a conducive atmosphere for teachers to feel accepted as they are. (Julia et al., 2024) added that supervisors who combine empathy, active listening, and non-judgemental feedback successfully create a supervisory environment that teachers perceive as a safe space for reflection rather than a threatening evaluation forum.

The principal's positive attitude is evident in the way he or she frames coaching messages in a constructive and optimistic manner. GP-01 stated: "His verbal support made me believe I have potential." Recognising a beginning teacher's potential, rather than simply identifying shortcomings, is a critical element that distinguishes empowering supervision from disempowering supervision. GP-04 added: "He gave me encouraging words that this supervision is not about finding fault, and that really changed the way I view future sessions. " Lubis and Izzah (2025) explained that verbal persuasion from a respected figure is one of the strongest sources in shaping an individual's self-efficacy. When a principal consistently conveys positive messages about a beginning teacher's potential, he or she is investing in the teacher's self-confidence, which will impact long-term teaching performance. This is in line with Ayumi & Nasution (2025) findings, which revealed that principals who are able to communicate in a dialogical, transparent, and supportive manner tend to generate higher work commitment and willingness to learn among teachers.

Equality in the initial meeting was realized through the practice of negotiating the observation focus, which actively involved novice teachers. KS-01 explained, "The way I set the observation focus is by discussing the draft lesson plan together and letting the teacher suggest which parts I need to observe more deeply, as well as agreeing on realistic success indicators together, so the teacher feels in control of the evaluation process." This

practice has implications that go beyond technical procedures. Novice teacher GP-03 stated: "He was very flexible in giving me space, even asking me to choose the material that I found most difficult to teach." When novice teachers are allowed to determine the observation agenda, they take ownership of the supervision process itself, which, according to (Ghamrawi, 2010) as a dual impact: increasing the relevance of feedback and strengthening teachers' commitment to follow up on recommendations received. However, this study also noted a critical note from GS-02: "The communication still tends to be one-way, top-down. Novice teachers usually just listen and nod without daring to express their real challenges." These findings indicate that the desired relational equality has not been fully realized in practice due to the persistence of cultural barriers such as a culture of reticence and excessive deference to authority figures.

Compared with previous research, the communication patterns found in this study are consistent with the findings of Julia et al. (2024) found that principals who integrated openness, empathy, and support in academic supervision successfully improved teacher professionalism across pedagogical, personal, social, and professional aspects. The difference is that both studies examined teachers in general, while this study specifically found that for beginning teachers, these five dimensions of interpersonal communication influence not only the quality of learning but also the formation of professional identity at a critical stage in their careers. Critically, the findings of this sub-focus indicate that the principal's communication patterns during the pre-conference phase at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang reflected humanistic and dialogical academic supervision. The five dimensions of interpersonal communication were clearly manifested and reduced novice teachers' evaluative anxiety. However, the equality dimension still faces structural-cultural barriers that need to be addressed through a systemic approach, not simply by changing the principal's individual communication style.

Interpersonal Communication Patterns of School Principals in the Learning Observation Stage

The learning observation phase is the most psychologically critical moment in the academic supervision cycle because it is at this stage that novice teachers are most vulnerable: they are teaching in the presence of an authority figure who is recording and evaluating their competency in real time. The success of academic supervision at this stage depends not only on the completeness of the instruments but also on the principal's ability to manage their physical presence and communication in such a way that novice teachers feel safe, not intimidated. This study found that the principal at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang consistently used planned nonverbal communication strategies to achieve this goal, while minimizing verbal communication in accordance with the principle of clinical observation that does not interrupt the learning process.

Physical Position Management Strategy. The principal (KS-01) explained how he managed his physical presence during observations: "I chose a position at the back of the classroom where I was inconspicuous so that students could focus fully on the teacher, and I avoided distracting activities, such as pacing or talking to students while the teacher was teaching." This choice of position was not merely a technical decision but rather a communicative one that determined novice teachers' perceptions of the intensity of supervision. Novice teacher GP-01 confirmed: "I felt professionally mentored because his sitting position was not too conspicuous." Meanwhile, GP-02 expressed, "His demeanor was very calm, so I felt like I was teaching in front of colleagues." In the clinical supervision framework developed by Glickman and cited by (Ghamrawi, 2010), an effective supervisor acts as a silent data collector who observes classroom dynamics without changing the ongoing learning ecology. Any unnecessary physical movement of the supervisor can increase teacher anxiety and reduce the validity of observational data.

Nonverbal Communication as a Psychological Regulation Tool. The most prominent finding during the observation phase was the dominance of nonverbal communication as the primary instrument influencing the affective state of novice teachers. The principal (KS-01) explained, "I maintain a friendly yet objective facial expression so that teachers feel comfortable without feeling pre-judged, and I demonstrate a focused and attentive posture regarding the observation notes as a sign of respect for the teaching and learning process." These various nonverbal expressions were directly responded to by novice teachers. GP-01 stated, "His slight smile from the back seat was enough to reduce the trembling in my hands. " GP-03 added, "He gave me a thumbs-up when I managed to calm a noisy class. That immediately made me feel calmer and more confident." Novice teacher GP-04 also stated: "At first I felt stiff, but over time I became accustomed to it because he smiled." These smiles, nods, and thumbs-up gestures were not simply spontaneous expressions, but rather communicative instruments that strategically provided real-time positive feedback without disrupting the learning flow. In interpersonal communication, the nonverbal components of a message have greater influence in emotionally charged interactions or hierarchically asymmetrical relationships (Butts et al., 2015; Gallois, 1994).

Impact on Novice Teachers' Perceptions. One of the most significant findings was the transformation in novice teachers' perceptions of the principal's presence during observations. When the principal successfully communicated through body language that he or she was present as a companion, not a judge, novice teachers

experienced a shift in perception that determined the quality of their openness in teaching. GP-02 stated, "His friendly eye contact encouraged me to explore my teaching methods." GP-03 added, "My comfort increased when I saw him or her laugh along when humor broke out in class. " GP-05 also stated: "Because he or she didn't move around much, I didn't feel distracted." This shift in perception from evaluative supervision to professional mentoring is crucial because it determines whether novice teachers present themselves authentically or defensively. When individuals are in a state of psychological safety, believing that they will not be punished for taking risks, they tend to display more innovative, authentic, and productive behavior, a condition that in the context of supervision produces more meaningful observation data and deeper learning experiences for teachers (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

A Senior Teacher's Perspective as External Confirmation. GS-01, who served as the mentor coordinator, provided important confirmation from a long-term observation perspective: "He maintained a high level of observation etiquette. Nonverbally, he sat quietly in the back and gave appreciative nodding gestures, which gave the novice teacher a boost of confidence. The classroom climate remained conducive and natural." This confirmation from the senior teacher is important because it demonstrates that the principal's nonverbal communication during the observation was not only perceived by the observed teacher but also appeared to be a consistent and deliberate strategy. However, a critical perspective emerged from GS-02, who observed: "The principal's physical presence in the corner of the classroom indirectly continued to create psychological tension for the novice teacher. Furthermore, his nonverbal behavior, which involved focusing too much on writing instrument notes without occasionally smiling, made the novice teacher appear somewhat stiff in his teaching." This critical observation indicates that the principal's nonverbal communication quality during the observation was not entirely consistent and depended on his ability to balance instrument note-taking with supportive nonverbal signals.

When compared with previous research findings, this study is consistent with the study by Hanafiah et al. (2022), who emphasized that supervisors skilled in clinical supervision are able to use observation instruments as analytical tools without losing their supportive interpersonal presence. Research in North Banjarbaru District also found a significant direct relationship between the principal's interpersonal communication and elementary school teacher performance, with the quality of the relationship during the observation process being one of the mediating variables. The main difference with this study is that previous research examined this relationship quantitatively, while this study qualitatively reveals how the principal's nonverbal communication works to create a conducive psychological environment, a mechanism not visible in the quantitative data. Critically, the findings of the second sub-focus confirm that during the observation phase, the principal's nonverbal communication plays a far more crucial role than verbal communication. The principal's success in creating observation conditions perceived by novice teachers as professionally supportive is a significant communicative achievement. However, this consistency requires the principal to actively maintain it, especially when instrument recording takes up most of their attention, leading to reduced or even cessation of supportive nonverbal expressions.

Interpersonal Communication Patterns of School Principals in the Post-Conference Stage

If the pre-conference is the trust-building phase and observation is the data-collection phase, then the post-conference is the stage where the full value of academic supervision is truly at stake. The effectiveness of the entire supervision cycle is determined predominantly by the quality of the conversations that occur during this phase: how feedback is delivered, how teachers are invited to reflect on their own practice, and how improvement plans are formulated collaboratively. Research at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang shows that the principal consistently uses a dialogic, reflective, and partnership-based approach during the post-conference phase, ensuring that feedback is received by novice teachers not as threatening criticism but as empowering input. Conversation Opening Techniques That Position Teachers as Subjects of Reflection. The first strategy the principal uses is to open the conversation by asking for the teacher's perspective before presenting the findings of his or her own observations. KS-01 explained, "I begin the discussion by asking how the teacher feels and views the teaching session just concluded, using phrases like 'I learned a lot from the way you managed the class earlier.' "Let's discuss some other interesting points."

This sequence is not simply a stylistic choice but rather an epistemological one that places the teacher's subjective experience as the starting point for reflection rather than as a final addition after the supervisor has finished speaking. GP-01 confirmed the positive impact of this approach: "He started by mentioning my strengths before points for improvement. That kept me from feeling immediately attacked. " GP-02 added, "Through a two-way discussion, he asked for my opinion first before giving suggestions. So I felt listened to, not just evaluated." GS-01 provided a sharp analysis of this technique: "He started with a reflective sentence like, 'In your opinion, which part was satisfactory?' and then gave tactical advice. This is very good for the professional growth of new teachers." This technique is known in the supervision literature as collaborative

inquiry, a joint investigation that places the teacher and supervisor together to analyze learning data. Fernanda et al. (2025) emphasize that modern academic supervision can no longer be practiced as an evaluative monologue but must operate as a collegial dialogue in which teachers and supervisors jointly understand and improve the quality of teaching.

The Significance of Diction Choice in Delivering Feedback. The most linguistically interesting finding is the role of word choice in shaping the supervisory relationship. The data show that the principal consistently used the first-person plural pronoun "we" in finding solutions. GP-02 expressed: "I felt like a partner, because he often used the word 'we' in finding solutions. "GP-05 expressed exactly the same thing: 'I felt like a partner, because he often used the word "we" in finding solutions.'" This shift from singular to plural pronouns has significant relational implications; it communicates that the principal positions himself on the same side as the teacher in facing learning challenges rather than in an adversarial position as a judge. GP-03 added an appreciation for the broader language choices: "The use of equal language and the absence of derogatory terms make me feel valued as a young colleague who needs guidance." Ayumi & Nasution (2025) found that principals who communicated in a dialogic, transparent, and supportive manner, including in their choice of diction, tended to foster higher work commitment and a willingness to learn among teachers.

Delivering Corrective Feedback as a Development Opportunity. The biggest challenge in post-conferences was how to convey areas for improvement without appearing defensive. Principals managed this challenge by framing improvement as development opportunities rather than as a list of deficiencies. KS-01 asserted, "I conveyed improvement aspects in the form of suggestions or development opportunities, not rigid, absolute orders, and focused on just one or two priority areas for improvement so that teachers wouldn't feel overwhelmed by too much input at once." GP-04 confirmed that this strategy was successful: "It was very subtle, as if we were discussing strategy, not criticism." GP-03 also revealed: "He gave concrete examples of how I should behave in class." This limited focus of feedback to one or two priority areas reflects an understanding of beginning teachers' cognitive limitations in processing information.

Developing a Collaborative Follow-Up Plan. A crucial final aspect of the post-conference was the process of formulating a follow-up plan. KS-01 explained the strategy used: "I encouraged independent problem identification by asking, 'What was the biggest challenge you felt during the session?'" This question encouraged novice teachers to act as active problem solvers, rather than passive recipients of solutions. The results were tangible: GP-01 stated, "I found it very helpful, especially regarding effective student grouping techniques. " GP-03 added, 'It was incredibly helpful; I immediately learned how to handle hyperactive students. GP-04 stated, "He gave practical tips on how to formulate stimulating questions for students. Academic supervision that positions teachers as partners in agenda formulation not only increases the relevance of feedback but also strengthens teachers' commitment to implementing recommendations because they have participated in its formulation (Ghamrawi, 2010).

When compared to previous research, the findings of this study align with those of (Julia et al., 2024), who found that supervision using a therapeutic communication approach, including reflective questioning techniques and non-judgmental feedback, successfully created a safe supervision environment and encouraged changes in teaching practice. Sobirin et al. (2023) also found that teachers who received feedback in a dialogic format demonstrated a higher capacity for self-reflection than teachers who received feedback in a traditional evaluative format. The difference is that Sobirin et al.'s study used a quantitative approach that measured short-term effects, while this study qualitatively explored how beginning teachers' post-conference experiences were deeply interpreted in their narratives. Critically, the findings of the third sub-focus confirm that the principal's interpersonal communication during the feedback meeting stage is a factor that transforms feedback from an evaluative mechanism into an instrument for professional growth. However, the effectiveness of this approach depends heavily on the novice teacher's reflective capacity. For teachers still in the earliest stages of adaptation, guided discovery techniques need to be combined with more explicit guidance to avoid confusion about corrective actions.

Interpersonal Communication Patterns in the Comprehensive Academic Supervision Cycle

The success of academic supervision cannot be judged solely by a single positive conversation but rather by the cumulative consistency of the principal's communication throughout the three stages of supervision and informal moments outside the formal schedule. Research at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang shows that this continuity is what distinguishes transformative supervision from supervision that merely follows procedures. Beginning teachers not only experienced change in a single post-conference session but also experienced gradual and ongoing professional transformation as a result of consistent communicative interactions with the principal. Consistency of Communication as a Source of Institutional Trust. The principal (KS-01) revealed a strategy for maintaining consistency throughout the cycle: "I regularly engage in informal interactions outside of the

supervision schedule to build a lasting relationship of trust." These informal interactions have an impact no less significant than formal supervision sessions.

Beginning teacher GP-04 expressed appreciation for this: "The way he appreciates my small successes in front of fellow teachers makes me even more motivated to continue developing." GS-01 confirmed from an observational perspective: "If leadership communication is dialogic and open, the impact is extraordinary. I observed that novice teachers at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang became much more confident, dared to apply active learning methods, and did not hesitate to show their draft lesson plans for correction. " Murtopo et al. (2025) explained that in trust theory, behavioral consistency is a key component of interpersonal trust: when someone behaves consistently across formal and informal contexts, others perceive them as predictable and trustworthy, a condition that in the context of supervision allows novice teachers to feel safe to present themselves authentically. Concrete Changes in Learning Practices as an Indicator of Success. The tangible impact of consistent principal communication is evident in specific and verifiable changes in teaching behavior among each beginning teacher. GP-01 revealed: "I am now more detailed in developing assessment rubrics for students." GP-02 stated: "I have started routinely using video media to capture students' attention at the beginning of class." GP-03 added: "My planning is now more focused on individual student needs, not just material targets." GP-04 revealed: "I now always conduct reflections at the end of lessons with students." Meanwhile, GP-05 echoed GP-02: "I have started routinely using video media to capture students' attention at the beginning of class."

This diversity of concrete changes, encompassing aspects of assessment, learning media, differentiation, and reflection, demonstrates that the feedback provided is truly tailored to each teacher's individual needs, rather than being uniform. Ernawati (2024) emphasized that effective academic supervision must be able to produce measurable changes in teachers' teaching practices, not simply improve teachers' perceptions of the supervision itself. Building Motivation Through Continuous Recognition and Reinforcement. Beginning teachers' motivation is not only formed during formal supervision sessions but is also strengthened through ongoing informal interactions with the principal. One of the most illustrative anecdotes comes from GS-01: "I remember a new PPPK teacher who was crying because her class was noisy during an observation. After the observation, the principal put her arm around her and said, 'A noisy class means the kids are active; we just need to channel their energy.' Those empathetic words motivated her, and she is now one of the most creative teachers in the school." This narrative clearly demonstrates how a single moment of empathetic and supportive communication can dramatically change a beginning teacher's professional trajectory.

While principals' communication patterns are generally positive, this study consistently identifies time constraints due to administrative burdens as a structural barrier that compromises the quality of supervision. KS-01 acknowledged, "The biggest obstacle is limited time amidst the busy administrative burden, which often makes discussion sessions feel rushed. " OS-01 added confirmation from the administrative side: "The main obstacle is the principal's sudden clash with the District Education Office's official schedule. As a result, the scheduled post-conference time allocation often shifts." GS-01 also stated, "Principals are caught up in the administrative burden of office work and completing digital documents, while teachers are busy with their full teaching load. As a result, supervisory communication is often rushed." Widyasari (2025) emphasized that one of the biggest paradoxes in Indonesian education management is the increasing administrative burden on principals in an era that demands more intensive instructional leadership.

In addition to structural barriers, GS-02 identified equally significant cultural barriers: "There are cultural barriers called seniority and cultural embarrassment. Beginning teachers have a psychological fear of initiating dialogue, considering asking or discussing questions with the principal as a form of incompetence. This barrier suggests that improving the quality of supervision cannot rely solely on developing the communication competencies of individual principals. Systemic interventions are needed that create space for beginning teachers to develop communication initiatives more independently. GS-02 recommends, "There needs to be a regular consultation schedule that is separate from assessment moments." "There should be a dedicated time slot outside of formal teaching hours where beginning teachers can sit down with the principal without the pressure of a grade." Meanwhile, PS-01 suggested, "The key to successful supervision lies in mutual trust. If the principal fails to build a psychologically safe communication bridge, no matter how sophisticated the supervision instrument, it will not change the quality of teachers in the classroom."

Critically, the discussion of the fourth subfocus emphasizes that successful academic supervision is the result of a series of mutually reinforcing interactions throughout the cycle, not just a single moment of good communication. The principal's consistent communication is the glue that connects teachers' psychological readiness, the observation process, follow-up, and changes in teaching practices. However, structural barriers in the form of administrative burdens and cultural barriers in the form of hierarchical culture require systemic handling that goes beyond the capacity of individual principals.

Novice Teachers' Perspectives on Principals' Communication Patterns in Academic Supervision

The novice teacher perspective is a dimension often absent from academic supervision research focused on supervisor competency. Most studies place the principal as the primary subject of analysis, while novice teachers are merely treated as objects receiving intervention. This research epistemologically reverses this perspective by positioning novice teachers' subjective experiences as legitimate and informative primary data. The results provide a more complete and honest picture of the extent to which principal communication truly achieves its goal of improving teacher performance and competency. The five novice teachers interviewed experienced a consistent pattern of experiential transformation: from evaluative anxiety to openness and professional confidence. GP-01 expressed this journey clearly: "At first I was shocked, but then I felt relieved after hearing the explanation of his purpose for guidance." GP-02 stated, "I was a little anxious, afraid that my teaching methods would be deemed ineffective. But after talking with him, that anxiety diminished considerably." GP-04 expressed a slightly different perspective: "I was curious about what shortcomings he might have noticed, but eventually that feeling transformed into constructive curiosity." Meanwhile, GP-03 had a unique initial response: "Feeling challenged to show my best performance in front of the principal."

The variation in this initial response shows that novice teachers entered supervision with different psychological backgrounds, but all experienced positive shifts after going through a series of dialogic communications with the principal. For novice teachers, the meaning given to the supervision experience will form a long-term cognitive schema about supervision as an institution (Nurfajria et al., 2024); if the initial experience is positive and empowering, novice teachers tend to develop an open orientation towards supervision throughout their careers. Analysis of novice teachers' narratives identified several key factors that foster a sense of security and support. GP-01 noted: "He was very open and asked me what the most common challenges I encountered in class were. " GP-02 appreciated: "The way he asked for help, not orders, when giving additional assignments." GP-03 appreciated: "The use of equal language and the absence of derogatory terms, and his willingness to listen to my reasons before passing judgment," GP-04 noted. Meanwhile, GP-01 also expressed, "His willingness to listen to my reasons before passing judgment made me feel valued as a partner, not just a subordinate." These factors collectively constitute what is known in the organizational literature as relational capital, which determines how deeply a subordinate is willing to invest in a relationship with their superior.

Furthermore, this study also identified factors that still cause anxiety in some novice teachers. This anxiety stems not from the principal's poor communication, but from the structural and cultural dimensions of supervision that cannot be fully controlled by interpersonal communication alone. GS-02 observed, "There is a communication gap where novice teachers feel embarrassed or neglected to consult directly." Meanwhile, PS-01 provided an extreme description of the consequences of poor supervisory communication from his experience at another school: "There was once a novice teacher who intended to resign because of the trauma of being sharply criticized by the principal in the meeting room." This narrative provides a very illustrative contrast: the positive conditions at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang are not the default of the supervision system, but rather the result of the principal's consistent communicative investment throughout his 13-year tenure. The impact of the principal's interpersonal communication on the competency of novice teachers is evident and specific. GP-01 stated: "I am now more detailed in developing assessment rubrics for students." GP-03 stated: "My planning is now more focused on individual student needs, not just material targets." GP-04 added: "I now always reflect with the students at the end of the lesson." Regarding the dimension of courage to take pedagogical risks, GP-01 stated: "His relaxed attitude makes me not afraid to improvise." GP-02 added: "I no longer hesitate to try new teaching methods."

These changes reflect improvements encompassing pedagogical competencies (planning, assessment, and differentiation strategies) and professional competencies (self-development initiative and willingness to accept feedback). (Julia et al., 2024) confirmed that implementing academic supervision through open, empathetic, and supportive interpersonal communication has been shown to improve teacher professionalism in all four main aspects: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. In terms of motivation, the impact of the principal's interpersonal communication is most evident in strengthening the self-efficacy of novice teachers. GP-01 stated, "Very significant; his verbal support made me believe I have potential." GP-03 revealed, "It increased my self-confidence because he acknowledged the progress I was making." GP-04 added, "It was very helpful; I was brave enough to make quick decisions when problems arose in class. " Lubis & Izzah (2025) explain that verbal persuasion from a respected figure is one of the strongest sources of self-efficacy, where explicit statements about one's abilities and progress from a trusted supervisor can significantly change a teacher's self-belief. GS-01 confirmed this from his long-term observations: "If the leadership's communication is dialogic and open, the impact is extraordinary. I observed novice teachers here becoming much more confident, daring to implement active learning methods, and not hesitating to show their draft lesson plans for correction."

When compared with previous research, these findings align with those of (Roberson & Roberson, 2009), who found that principals who communicate openly and respond to teacher feedback are key factors supporting the achievement of educational goals. This study contributes to the literature by qualitatively uncovering the psychological mechanisms that explain why and how principals' interpersonal communication impacts the performance of beginning teachers, an explanation that quantitative research designs cannot provide. Critically, the perspectives of novice teachers in this study emphasize that the success of academic supervision must ultimately be measured by how meaningful the process is perceived by novice teachers as a professional learning experience. The principal's humanistic and dialogic interpersonal communication has been shown to transform supervision from a formal procedure into a strategic investment in developing novice teachers' competencies. However, cultural barriers such as a culture of reluctance and structural barriers such as time constraints suggest that sustainable improvement in the quality of academic supervision requires synergy between the principal's individual communication competency, transformation of the school's organizational culture, and policy reforms that reduce the principal's administrative burden as an instructional leader.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings, this study concludes that the principal's interpersonal communication patterns in implementing academic supervision for novice teachers at SD Negeri 12 Muara Padang are fundamentally humanistic, dialogical, supportive, and professionally developmental. These patterns manifest through five core principles openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality which permeate every stage of the supervision process, from initial meetings and classroom observations to constructive feedback sessions. This communication approach ensures that novice teachers are treated as valued partners in professional growth rather than mere subjects of evaluation, effectively reducing their anxiety and building foundational trust. The supervision itself proceeds through systematic stages pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, and post-observation feedback meetings each executed with an emphasis on dialogue, reflective practice, and constructive input. Consequently, academic supervision transforms from a potentially oppressive control mechanism into a genuine mentoring process that helps novice teachers identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Crucially, these interpersonal communication patterns play a pivotal role in enhancing novice teacher performance; open and supportive dialogue encourages greater confidence, willingness to experiment with innovative strategies, deeper reflective practice, and heightened receptivity to feedback. This underscores that the success of academic supervision is predominantly determined by the quality of the communicative relationship between principal and novice teachers, as effective communication fosters motivation, strengthens self-efficacy, and catalyzes positive pedagogical changes. Practically, this study recommends that school principals in similar contexts intentionally cultivate humanistic communication competencies particularly active listening, empathetic responding, and non-judgmental feedback delivery as integral components of their supervisory practice. Supervision should be explicitly framed as collaborative professional development, not inspection, with structured protocols that prioritize teacher voice and self-reflection. Principal training programs must therefore incorporate interpersonal communication modules alongside technical supervisory skills. Additionally, schools should establish regular, low-stakes mentoring check-ins to normalize ongoing dialogue and reduce performance anxiety, particularly for novice teachers. For future research, it is recommended to expand this qualitative case study into comparative investigations across multiple schools and districts to test the generalizability of these patterns. Quantitative or mixed-method designs could measure the correlation between specific communication dimensions and measurable teaching outcomes. Longitudinal studies would be valuable to track how novice teachers' professional growth trajectories evolve over time under sustained humanistic supervision. Furthermore, exploring novice teachers' own perceptions and lived experiences of supervisory communication could yield deeper insights into which specific communicative behaviors are most impactful. Finally, examining the role of contextual factors such as school culture, principal tenure, or teacher demographics would enrich theoretical models and inform more tailored supervisory interventions.

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