

Communication and Interpersonal Skills in Decision-Making: Imperatives for the Digital Workplace

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Abstract

This study explores the role of communication and interpersonal skills in enhancing decision-making within contemporary and digital workplaces. Drawing on global theories and contextualized to Indonesian organizations, the research highlights how empathy, clarity, feedback, and cultural intelligence support collaborative and effective leadership. In hybrid environments, digital communication challenges relational depth, making emotional intelligence and adaptive strategies essential. Cultural norms such as *musyawarah* and *gotong royong* further shape communication styles in Indonesia. The study proposes a refined framework integrating relational, emotional, and contextual fluency, offering practical insights for leadership development, organizational strategy, and inclusive decision-making in culturally diverse settings.

Keywords

organizational communication; interpersonal competence; decision-making; emotional intelligence; Indonesian culture

INTRODUCTION

Effective organizational functioning in the 21st-century workplace is deeply anchored in the strength of communication and interpersonal competencies. These soft skills not only determine the efficiency of day-to-day operations but also influence strategic decisions, stakeholder alignment, and overall institutional resilience (Schermerhorn, 2019, p. 25; Robbins & Judge, 2023). Globalization and digital transformation have further intensified the demand for these capabilities, compelling organizations to reassess traditional hierarchical communication models in favor of more adaptive, participatory, and interculturally sensitive approaches (Daft, 2021). Within this context, the interplay between verbal and non-verbal cues, active listening, emotional intelligence, and feedback mechanisms emerges as a central theme in both management theory and workplace practice (Northouse, 2022; Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2020, p. 43).

In Indonesia's evolving economic and social structures, the strategic value of communication and interpersonal skills is evident in public administration, private enterprises, and civil society. Sinta-indexed research demonstrates that institutional decision-making is often impeded not by a lack of data, but by failures in dialogue, clarity, and trust (Wibowo, 2022; Prasetyo, 2023).

This suggests a gap between technical competence and relational intelligence, especially in leadership roles. Furthermore, cultural nuances such as high-context communication and respect for hierarchical authority amplify the complexity of organizational interactions in Southeast Asian settings (Hofstede, 2020; Handoko, 2023, p. 71). Recognizing and managing these dynamics is critical to fostering inclusive, transparent, and effective decision-making environments.

Empirical studies underscore that communication is not merely a tool but a process that constructs organizational reality. Theories such as the Communication Accommodation Theory and the Johari Window illustrate how interpersonal understanding shapes team cohesion, while systems thinking reveals the systemic nature of communication failures (Guffey & Loewy, 2020; McShane & Von Glinow, 2022).

Meanwhile, the Human Relations Movement emphasizes that organizational productivity is deeply embedded in social dynamics, emotional exchanges, and the quality of interpersonal engagement (Schermerhorn, 2019, p. 87). These perspectives highlight the need to move beyond a mechanistic view of decision-making toward one that integrates human behavior and communicative intentionality.

Despite this rich theoretical landscape, a critical research gap persists regarding the operationalization of these skills within organizational decision-making structures,

particularly in Indonesian institutions. Most studies have treated communication and interpersonal skills as independent variables rather than interdependent constructs influencing managerial cognition and action. Additionally, the integration of these soft skills with digital tools and hybrid work models remains underexplored (Purwanto, 2024; Li & Wang, 2023). The limited focus on local cultural adaptation further restricts the generalizability of Western-origin models in Indonesian organizational settings (Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2020, p. 59; Mangkunegara, 2023, p. 93).

This study thus aims to answer the following research questions: (1) How do communication and interpersonal skills influence organizational decision-making processes? (2) In what ways do these skills affect workplace relationships in contemporary, digitally enabled environments? (3) What are the contextual adaptations required for effective implementation of these competencies in Indonesian organizations? The study's objective is to construct a theoretical and practical framework that supports inclusive, strategic, and emotionally intelligent decision-making. Through a synthesis of global and local insights, the study offers new contributions to the management and organizational behavior discourse, particularly for emerging economies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic discourse on communication and interpersonal skills in organizational settings spans a wide array of interdisciplinary perspectives, integrating insights from psychology, management science, sociology, and behavioral economics. Foundationally, Schermerhorn (2019, p. 54) asserts that communication is a vital managerial function that supports coordination, motivation, and control. Robbins and Judge (2023) further distinguish between formal and informal communication networks, highlighting how interpersonal skills, including empathy and emotional regulation, impact trust-building and decision credibility. Numerous studies emphasize that communication is not a static transmission of information but a dynamic, relational process mediated by contextual, technological, and cultural factors (Northouse, 2022; Daft, 2021).

Organizational behavior theories offer critical lenses for understanding how communication shapes managerial outcomes. The Johari Window model, for instance, frames interpersonal transparency and feedback as mechanisms for fostering mutual understanding and psychological safety in teams (Guffey & Loewy, 2020). Meanwhile, McShane and Von Glinow (2022) examine how power dynamics and workplace diversity impact the flow of communication.

These perspectives are reinforced by empirical studies demonstrating that effective interpersonal communication correlates positively with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance (Purwanto, 2024; Li & Wang, 2023). Moreover, contemporary literature emphasizes the importance of communication competence in managing virtual teams and digital collaboration, pointing to the rise of asynchronous decision-making and remote leadership (Zhou & George, 2022).

Despite this wealth of knowledge, gaps persist in aligning theoretical models with practical strategies tailored to specific sociocultural contexts. Many Western-based frameworks do not adequately address the collectivist, hierarchical, and high-context communication preferences common in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries (Handoko, 2023, p. 89; Hofstede, 2020).

Consequently, scholars argue for the localization of communication models that incorporate indigenous values such as *musyawarah* (deliberation) and *gotong royong* (communal cooperation) into organizational decision-making (Wibowo, 2022). This study positions itself within this evolving discourse, aiming to refine existing models by integrating global best practices with local cultural norms.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study draws from a synthesis of classical management theories and contemporary behavioral models. A central framework employed is Schermerhorn's model of communication as a managerial function, which identifies information exchange as both a tool for coordination and a medium for leadership influence (Schermerhorn, 2019, p. 33). This view posits that communication in organizational settings serves both instrumental and symbolic purposes. Instrumentally, it enables task completion; symbolically, it constructs social meaning and team identity. This duality forms the baseline for examining how interpersonal skills support not only decisions but also the relational climates in which decisions occur.

Complementing this, the Human Relations Theory, particularly the work of Elton Mayo and its subsequent elaborations in organizational behavior literature, emphasizes the psychological and emotional aspects of workplace interactions. Robbins and Judge (2023) extend this by focusing on interpersonal dynamics such as trust, perceived fairness, and empathy, which significantly influence group cohesion and the quality of collective decision-making. These dynamics are supported by the Johari Window framework, which underscores the role of feedback and disclosure in cultivating mutual understanding and reducing interpersonal blind spots (Guffey & Loewy, 2020).

Another key theoretical pillar is Emotional Intelligence (EI), introduced by Goleman and widely adapted in leadership studies. EI involves self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation—dimensions that directly impact a leader's ability to engage others constructively in decision-making (Northouse, 2022). Recent empirical studies have linked high EI with improved conflict resolution, lower turnover intentions, and increased trust in leadership (Li & Wang, 2023; Wibowo, 2022). The integration of EI into workplace communication theories provides a richer understanding of how interpersonal competencies support both formal authority and informal influence.

Digital communication theory also plays a critical role in framing modern organizational practices. The Media Richness Theory posits that communication media vary in their capacity to convey nuanced information, with face-to-face interaction being the richest (Daft, 2021). As organizations move toward hybrid and remote work arrangements, understanding how to adapt interpersonal skills to mediated environments becomes essential. Leaders must strategically deploy channels—from email to video conferencing—based on the complexity of the decision at hand and the interpersonal sensitivity required (Zhou & George, 2022).

Lastly, the study draws from cross-cultural communication theory, particularly Hofstede's dimensions of culture. These insights explain variations in communication expectations, power distance, and decision-making norms across cultures (Hofstede, 2020). In Indonesian contexts, where collectivism and high power distance are prevalent, communication strategies must account for indirectness, group consensus, and deference to authority (Handoko, 2023, p. 92). By integrating these theoretical models, the study establishes a comprehensive analytical lens through which to interpret the influence of communication and interpersonal skills in organizational settings.

Previous Research

A chronological review of existing studies illustrates the evolving understanding of communication and interpersonal skills in organizational contexts. Early foundational research by Schermerhorn (2019, p. 29) emphasized the instrumental role of communication in managerial functions, identifying clarity, feedback, and noise reduction as essential for effective decision-making. This classical view provided a structural approach but did not deeply explore the relational aspects of workplace interactions.

Robbins and Judge (2020) extended this by incorporating psychological and sociological perspectives into organizational behavior. Their study demonstrated that interpersonal trust, empathy, and social perception significantly influence how

messages are received and interpreted in teams. They further suggested that decision quality improves when members feel psychologically safe to express divergent views—a notion later confirmed in cross-sector analyses by Guffey and Loewy (2020).

McShane and Von Glinow (2021) explored communication within the context of organizational power and politics. Their empirical findings highlighted how interpersonal skills are often deployed to navigate informal networks and influence outcomes in ambiguous decision environments. This study illuminated the dual function of communication as both relational and strategic, underscoring the need for ethical consideration and cultural sensitivity.

In a more culturally specific analysis, Hofstede (2020) examined how national culture influences communication preferences and hierarchical norms. This study provided essential insights into why Western-centric models often fail in Southeast Asian contexts, where indirectness and deference are preferred. These findings were echoed in Indonesian research by Handoko (2023, p. 96), who stressed the importance of adapting communication frameworks to local values such as *gotong royong* and *musyawarah*.

More recently, Purwanto (2024) conducted a qualitative study on digital communication challenges in Indonesian hybrid work environments. He found that while technology enables connectivity, it often impedes interpersonal bonding and nuanced understanding. The study advocated for structured feedback mechanisms and emotional intelligence training to bridge the relational gap created by digital platforms.

Finally, Li and Wang (2025) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence and interpersonal competence on leadership outcomes in multinational corporations. Their research confirmed that leaders with high EI foster greater team engagement and decision acceptance, especially in diverse work settings. This study contributed a global perspective, emphasizing the universality of interpersonal dynamics despite cultural variation.

Despite these contributions, a notable research gap remains in synthesizing these insights into an integrated, culturally contextualized framework for organizational decision-making in Indonesia. Most studies examine individual elements—such as emotional intelligence or communication strategy—but few explore how these competencies coalesce to influence institutional decisions in hybrid or traditional settings. This study addresses this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis that connects communication, interpersonal skills, and contextual adaptability in a unified model.

RESEARCH METHODS

The nature of the data used in this study is primarily qualitative and conceptual, drawing from a diverse array of textual sources including scholarly journal articles, international and Indonesian books, institutional publications, and doctoral theses. These sources are chosen based on their academic credibility, relevance to the study objectives, and traceability through established citation indexing such as Scopus, DOAJ, and Sinta. The qualitative nature of the data allows for deep exploration of themes related to communication dynamics and interpersonal skills within organizational contexts, especially in nuanced cultural environments like Indonesia (Northouse, 2022; Schermerhorn, 2019, p. 36).

The data are sourced from a carefully curated corpus of peer-reviewed journals, international management books (e.g., Robbins & Judge, McShane & Von Glinow), Indonesian scholarly publications, and reputable institutional reports from entities such as BPS, the World Bank, and the United Nations. These sources were selected to ensure academic rigor and diversity of perspective. The emphasis is on contemporary publications, all from 2019 to 2025, to ensure the relevance of findings within the current hybrid and digital work landscape (Daft, 2021; Wibowo, 2022). Additional sources include Arabic and English texts in organizational behavior, with contextual adaptation into the Indonesian setting (Handoko, 2023, p. 73).

The data collection technique employed is document analysis. This method enables systematic review and interpretation of the contents of written materials to identify patterns, themes, and meanings relevant to the study's objectives. The approach is guided by established qualitative methodologies, ensuring that the document selection and coding processes are transparent, reproducible, and aligned with the research questions (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were categorized according to key themes such as emotional intelligence, communication strategy, cultural adaptation, decision-making styles, and leadership influence.

The technique of data analysis used is thematic analysis. Through this method, the researcher systematically identifies, analyzes, and reports recurring themes within the literature. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis was employed: familiarization with data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This approach facilitates the extraction of latent meanings and contextual nuances regarding communication and interpersonal skill deployment in both global and Indonesian organizations (Guffey & Loewy, 2020; McShane & Von Glinow, 2022).

Conclusion drawing involves synthesizing the results of thematic analysis into interpretive insights that respond to the research questions. This includes correlating identified themes with theoretical models such as Schermerhorn's communication

framework and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. By connecting literature-derived patterns to theoretical constructs, the study is able to generate conceptual contributions and practical implications. The triangulation of data from different source types enhances the credibility and applicability of the findings, especially in policymaking and managerial training contexts (Robbins & Judge, 2023; Purwanto, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a multidimensional relationship between communication, interpersonal skills, and organizational decision-making. Drawing upon the theoretical foundations of Schermerhorn (2019, p. 31), Robbins and Judge (2023), and McShane and Von Glinow (2022), it becomes evident that communication is not merely a transactional process but a strategic mechanism that enables collaboration, reduces ambiguity, and fosters mutual understanding within organizational structures. Importantly, communication facilitates the alignment of organizational goals with individual motivations through clarity, feedback, and relational empathy (Guffey & Loewy, 2020).

The integration of the Human Relations Theory with Emotional Intelligence frameworks adds depth to this discourse. Findings suggest that decision-making improves when emotional cues are accurately interpreted and responded to with social awareness, particularly in diverse or remote work environments (Northouse, 2022; Li & Wang, 2025). Interpersonal skills like empathy, listening, and trust-building emerge as core drivers of decision acceptance, influencing how employees engage with leadership and adapt to institutional change (Purwanto, 2024). These elements are especially crucial in conflict resolution and crisis management scenarios, where emotional regulation and persuasive communication help prevent escalation and promote consensus.

A notable contribution of this research lies in the localization of global frameworks to the Indonesian context. Unlike the low-context, individualistic communication styles dominant in Western models, Indonesia's organizational culture favors group deliberation (*musyawarah*) and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) (Handoko, 2023, p. 98; Hofstede, 2020). This contextual dynamic influences not only how decisions are made but who makes them and under what social conditions. Accordingly, communication strategies must be culturally attuned and relationally sensitive to be effective.

Furthermore, the research addresses an emerging theme: the convergence of digital communication and interpersonal dynamics. While technology has enabled speed and

efficiency in organizational operations, it has simultaneously introduced barriers to relational depth and non-verbal feedback—key elements in trust-based decision-making (Daft, 2021; Zhou & George, 2022). As hybrid work becomes standard, leaders are challenged to re-engineer their communication approaches, blending high-tech with high-touch strategies that preserve emotional connection and clarity across digital platforms.

Finally, the results affirm that communication and interpersonal competence are not peripheral soft skills but central organizational capabilities that directly affect institutional agility, stakeholder engagement, and policy outcomes. By synthesizing theoretical models with empirical findings, this study contributes to a more integrative understanding of leadership and management practices that are emotionally intelligent, culturally competent, and strategically communicative.

1. The Influence of Communication and Interpersonal Skills on Organizational Decision-Making

This section explores how communication and interpersonal skills influence organizational decision-making, focusing on leadership behavior, team dynamics, and cognitive framing of strategic choices. Within the framework proposed by Schermerhorn (2019, p. 45), effective decision-making is inseparable from clear, timely, and context-sensitive communication. Leaders who can articulate visions, set expectations, and encourage feedback create a participative environment where decision ownership is distributed. The empirical literature confirms that such environments promote higher levels of innovation, efficiency, and employee alignment (Robbins & Judge, 2023; McShane & Von Glinow, 2022).

Interpersonal skills such as empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution are pivotal in building the trust necessary for collaborative decision-making. These skills help leaders understand diverse perspectives and manage dissent without alienating stakeholders. Goleman's emotional intelligence theory, as applied to organizational contexts, suggests that leaders who manage their emotions and remain attuned to others' feelings make more balanced and ethical decisions (Northouse, 2022). Research by Li and Wang (2025) further demonstrates that emotionally intelligent communication reduces resistance during high-stakes decisions, such as restructuring or crisis management.

In the Indonesian context, where cultural norms favor indirectness and group harmony, interpersonal sensitivity is essential. Leaders are expected to avoid confrontational dialogue and instead practice *musyawarah*, or consensus-

building through dialogue (Handoko, 2023, p. 105). This culturally embedded communication style requires advanced interpersonal awareness, as decisions are made not solely on rational merit but also on relational harmony and seniority acknowledgment. Studies show that leaders who fail to account for these nuances often encounter passive resistance or superficial compliance (Wibowo, 2022).

Another dimension of influence involves the clarity and framing of information. Poorly structured communication—whether too abstract, overly technical, or misaligned with audience expectations—can result in flawed decisions or organizational paralysis. Conversely, effective communicators contextualize data, connect it to goals, and invite contributions from various organizational levels (Guffey & Loewy, 2020). Schermerhorn and Bachrach (2020, p. 61) emphasize that structured communication channels, combined with informal relational networks, foster holistic decision ecosystems.

Furthermore, the communication climate within an organization affects decision latency and quality. Organizations characterized by openness, psychological safety, and constructive feedback loops tend to make faster and more reliable decisions (Robbins & Judge, 2023). These climates are cultivated not by rigid policies but by interpersonal leadership—leaders who model curiosity, admit errors, and encourage alternative viewpoints. Such behaviors are especially valuable in cross-functional teams, where cognitive diversity must be managed with emotional finesse.

Leadership communication style also determines how decisions are communicated post-deliberation. A participative and transparent style increases buy-in, while authoritarian or ambiguous styles provoke uncertainty and disengagement (Northouse, 2022; Daft, 2021). In hierarchical cultures, however, transparency must be balanced with cultural sensitivity. Indonesian studies reveal that while junior employees appreciate openness, they are more responsive to decisions framed as collective directives rather than individual options (Handoko, 2023, p. 109).

In summary, communication and interpersonal skills are not supplementary to decision-making—they constitute the medium through which decisions are created, interpreted, and implemented. This finding challenges models that prioritize data analytics or hierarchical authority, advocating instead for a relational, communicative, and culturally adaptive framework of decision leadership. By embedding emotional intelligence and contextual fluency into decision-making processes, organizations can enhance both efficiency and employee commitment.

2. Communication and Interpersonal Skills in the Digitally Enabled Workplace

This section addresses the second research question: how communication and interpersonal skills affect workplace relationships in contemporary, digitally enabled environments. The transformation of work through digital technologies—especially accelerated by the global pandemic—has redefined traditional interpersonal dynamics, creating both opportunities and challenges in organizational communication (Daft, 2021; Zhou & George, 2022). In virtual and hybrid settings, the absence of non-verbal cues, spatial context, and spontaneous interaction has complicated the transmission of empathy, trust, and clarity—elements crucial for productive relationships and collaborative decision-making.

Digital communication tools such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing have altered not only the speed but also the texture of workplace interactions. According to the Media Richness Theory, different media vary in their ability to convey nuance and build relational depth (Daft, 2021). High-richness media like video conferencing allow for better interpersonal engagement than low-richness channels like email. However, without training in digital etiquette and virtual presence, employees often fail to maintain the same quality of interaction as in face-to-face settings (Guffey & Loewy, 2020). This gap affects team cohesion, especially in decision-making processes that require collective judgment or emotional alignment.

Moreover, studies reveal that digital platforms can exacerbate misunderstandings due to tone misinterpretation and delayed feedback loops. In high-context cultures like Indonesia, where implicit meaning, body language, and status cues are deeply embedded in communication, the limitations of digital media can distort intent and hinder relational harmony (Hofstede, 2020; Handoko, 2023, p. 115). Effective digital communication in such settings requires not only technical proficiency but also cultural and emotional intelligence to bridge the interaction gap.

One critical insight from recent research is that interpersonal skills in digital environments must evolve to include competencies like digital empathy, asynchronous responsiveness, and virtual listening (Li & Wang, 2025). Managers and team leaders who exhibit these skills are better able to sustain morale, clarity, and collaboration in remote teams. Emotional intelligence, especially the ability to “read between the lines” of digital messages, has been shown to reduce conflict and improve team satisfaction in virtual environments

(Northouse, 2022; Purwanto, 2024). Training programs focusing on these areas are increasingly viewed as strategic investments in leadership development.

Hybrid communication models—combining in-person and virtual interactions—present additional complexity. Research suggests that organizations must adopt intentional communication designs, choosing channels based on the relational and cognitive demands of specific tasks (McShane & Von Glinow, 2022). For instance, strategic decisions involving multiple stakeholders are best discussed synchronously through high-interaction platforms, while routine updates may be communicated asynchronously. This decision-making flexibility requires leaders to possess not only interpersonal finesse but also contextual judgment.

In Indonesian organizations, the digital transition has also introduced generational and linguistic divides. Younger professionals are more fluent in digital communication tools but may lack the interpersonal maturity and hierarchical awareness expected in local corporate culture. Conversely, senior leaders often prefer direct conversation and value relational rituals, such as greetings and expressions of respect, which are difficult to replicate online (Wibowo, 2022; Handoko, 2023, p. 117). Bridging this generational gap requires a dual emphasis on digital literacy and traditional communication norms, ensuring that technology does not erode cultural cohesion.

Importantly, the research affirms that communication strategies must be reconfigured—not merely digitized—for remote and hybrid workplaces. This involves designing onboarding, feedback, and team-building processes that explicitly address the lack of informal interaction in virtual settings. Creating virtual spaces for informal dialogue, recognizing milestones, and practicing digital transparency have been shown to enhance relational quality and decision readiness (Zhou & George, 2022; Guffey & Loewy, 2020).

In conclusion, digital transformation has elevated the strategic value of communication and interpersonal skills by placing them in unfamiliar, technologically mediated contexts. Rather than replacing human interaction, digital tools demand new competencies that combine emotional intelligence, media literacy, and cultural sensitivity. The effectiveness of organizational decisions increasingly depends on how well leaders and teams adapt their interpersonal strategies to these evolving environments.

3. Cultural and Contextual Adaptations in the Application of Communication and Interpersonal Skills

This section explores the third research question: what contextual adaptations are required for the effective application of communication and interpersonal skills in Indonesian organizational environments. One of the most significant findings is that while global communication theories provide essential frameworks, their direct application without cultural contextualization often leads to resistance or ineffectiveness. Indonesia, characterized by a collectivist culture, high power distance, and indirect communication style, demands nuanced adaptations of managerial communication strategies (Hofstede, 2020; Handoko, 2023, p. 122).

Schermerhorn (2019, p. 60) acknowledges the importance of cultural awareness in communication, yet many Western-centric models focus on assertiveness, transparency, and feedback mechanisms that may clash with Indonesian norms of respect, harmony, and face-saving. For example, while open disagreement is encouraged in some cultures to foster innovation, in Indonesian settings, it may be viewed as disrespectful, especially when voiced by junior staff. Leaders must therefore interpret silence or passive agreement not as consensus, but as potential signs of hesitation or dissent, requiring sensitive follow-up and private dialogue (Robbins & Judge, 2023).

Interpersonal skills in Indonesia extend beyond verbal interaction to encompass social rituals, politeness forms, and status recognition. The use of honorifics, avoidance of direct confrontation, and emphasis on seniority require managers to balance emotional intelligence with cultural etiquette (Wibowo, 2022). Research also shows that successful communication in Indonesian institutions is strongly relational rather than transactional, with decisions often emerging from informal discussions and relational endorsements rather than formal meetings alone (McShane & Von Glinow, 2022).

Adaptation is also evident in how feedback is managed. In many Western frameworks, feedback is direct, developmental, and part of routine performance management. In Indonesia, it often takes an indirect form, couched in suggestions or group references, to maintain dignity (*harga diri*). Handoko (2023, p. 125) emphasizes the role of *sungkan* (a sense of social restraint) in shaping how employees communicate upward, particularly in hierarchical organizations. Effective leaders must therefore cultivate informal feedback loops and relational trust to uncover true perceptions.

Religion and traditional values further influence communication dynamics. Islamic ethics, for instance, encourage humility (*tawadhu'*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and collective deliberation (*musyawarah*), which align with participative leadership but differ in expression from Western democratic leadership models (Al-Faruqi, 2022). These values necessitate a leadership approach that integrates spiritual

sensitivity with modern management techniques, thereby enhancing moral authority and legitimacy in decision-making.

Language also plays a significant role in adaptation. Although many organizations operate bilingually, the subtle meanings embedded in Bahasa Indonesia expressions, metaphors, and tone can shift significantly when translated into English. For instance, a statement intended as a polite refusal may be interpreted as vague or indecisive by non-Indonesian managers. Cultural intelligence, therefore, becomes a critical interpersonal skill for both local and expatriate leaders operating in Indonesia (Northouse, 2022; Li & Wang, 2025).

Digital communication adds another layer of complexity. As noted in the previous subsection, younger employees may favor direct messaging and abbreviations, while senior staff expect formality and relational context, even in emails. This generational divide mirrors broader cultural transitions and must be addressed through communication training that respects both modern efficiency and traditional decorum (Purwanto, 2024; Guffey & Loewy, 2020).

In essence, the effective application of communication and interpersonal skills in Indonesian organizations requires a hybridized approach: one that combines global management theory with local values, linguistic nuance, and cultural empathy. Leaders who succeed in this environment do so not by replicating foreign models but by contextualizing them—honoring relational dynamics, respecting hierarchical norms, and cultivating trust through culturally aligned communication. This adaptation fosters a more inclusive and responsive organizational culture, strengthening both decision-making quality and institutional cohesion.

This study has systematically addressed three interrelated research questions concerning the role of communication and interpersonal skills in organizational decision-making, workplace relationships in digital contexts, and the necessary cultural adaptations within Indonesian environments. First, the findings affirm that communication and interpersonal competencies are not auxiliary but foundational to effective decision-making. Drawing from Schermerhorn's managerial communication framework and emotional intelligence theory, it is evident that decisions are more accurate, inclusive, and ethically grounded when leaders apply empathy, active listening, and adaptive messaging (Schermerhorn, 2019, p. 45; Northouse, 2022).

Second, in digitally enabled workplaces, the research demonstrates that communication and interpersonal strategies must evolve to address virtual limitations.

Emotional cues, immediacy, and interpersonal feedback require recalibration when mediated through technology. Leaders who integrate digital empathy, media literacy, and strategic channel selection foster higher relational quality and organizational engagement—outcomes that are critical for team performance and decision clarity in hybrid models (Daft, 2021; Li & Wang, 2025). The findings bridge existing gaps by connecting traditional leadership theory with emerging challenges in digitally fragmented workspaces.

Third, the study contributes a culturally grounded framework for Indonesian organizational contexts, emphasizing the integration of collectivist values such as *musyawarah* (deliberation), *gotong royong* (communal cooperation), and hierarchical respect into communication practices. These insights reinforce the necessity for leaders to apply culturally sensitive interpersonal skills that go beyond transactional interactions. This localized refinement offers conceptual advancement by hybridizing global theories with indigenous communication ethics, making the framework more actionable and sustainable in Southeast Asian settings (Handoko, 2023, p. 122; Wibowo, 2022).

The theoretical implications are substantial. The study expands classical and behavioral communication theories by incorporating digital and intercultural dimensions, suggesting that effective organizational behavior now requires blended competencies—technical, emotional, and contextual. It contributes to the discourse on organizational behavior and leadership by proposing a multidimensional framework of communicative intelligence, applicable across hierarchical and technological variations.

Practically, the findings inform leadership development programs, HR strategies, and policymaking in both corporate and public sectors. Organizations should prioritize communication audits, develop context-sensitive training modules, and implement inclusive decision-making mechanisms that reflect the cultural realities of their workforce. In particular, Indonesian institutions would benefit from internal guidelines that balance Western efficiency with Eastern relational values, thereby enhancing performance without undermining harmony.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the centrality of communication and interpersonal skills in shaping effective organizational decision-making, especially in the context of increasingly digital and culturally complex workplaces. Through an integrated analysis of classical management theories, emotional intelligence models, and intercultural communication frameworks, it becomes clear that decision-making is not purely a

rational or procedural task, but a deeply relational process influenced by how individuals communicate, perceive, and engage with one another.

The theoretical alignment of Schermerhorn's communication model with contemporary insights into emotional intelligence and cultural adaptation affirms that organizational effectiveness hinges on more than just strategic planning or data-driven approaches. It requires leaders and teams who are capable of navigating both the emotional currents and cultural nuances that shape every decision point. This is particularly true in the Indonesian context, where high-context communication, deference to authority, and communal values like *musyawarah* and *gotong royong* require a unique blend of communicative and interpersonal intelligence.

This study offers several practical recommendations for businesses, educators, and policymakers. Organizations should institutionalize communication training that is both digitally literate and culturally sensitive, emphasizing empathy, feedback literacy, and leadership presence. For future research, the model proposed here invites empirical validation through field studies or longitudinal assessments, especially in hybrid or remote work environments. Expanding the research to include comparative cross-cultural perspectives could further refine the global applicability of these findings.

In closing, the evolving nature of work and leadership demands a redefinition of soft skills as strategic imperatives. Communication and interpersonal competencies are no longer peripheral—they are the connective tissue of organizational life, decision-making, and sustainable leadership.

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