

The Impact of Interpersonal Communication as a Moderating Variable on the Relationship between Commitment, Discipline, Motivation, and Early Childhood Education Teachers' Performance

Dwi Prasetyawati Diah Hariyanti¹, Fakhruddin², Kardoyo³, Mintarsih Arbarini⁴

Abstract

The early childhood education sector faces increasingly complex challenges in maintaining the quality of teacher performance. This study aims to identify the influence of commitment, discipline, and motivation on teacher performance and understand the role of interpersonal communication as a moderating variable in these relationships. Using survey data from early childhood teachers in Semarang City with a sample of 313 respondents, this study used SmartPLS analysis to test these relationships. The results show that commitment, discipline, and motivation significantly impact teacher performance, with discipline emerging as the strongest direct influence. Interpersonal communication significantly affected performance and moderated the relationship between the independent variables and teacher performance. The study found that communication strengthened the positive effects of discipline and motivation on performance, although it showed a negative moderating effect on the commitment-performance relationship. The findings indicate that educational institutions should develop integrated strategies that combine core competency development with effective communication practices to achieve sustainable improvements in teacher performance.

Keywords: *Teacher Performance, Interpersonal Communication, Commitment, Discipline, Motivation.*

Introduction

Early childhood education has become a global focus in human resource development, with teacher performance as a critical factor determining learning success. Early childhood education quality highly depends on teachers' ability to create an effective learning environment that supports children's optimal development. This challenges educational institutions to continuously improve and sustain teacher performance through various sustainable strategic approaches.

Positive interactions between teachers and students significantly impact creating a conducive learning environment (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Strong interpersonal relationships among early childhood teachers, principals, and students are positively correlated with job satisfaction and performance in educational settings (Osasuyi & Matthew, 2024).

Factors affecting early childhood teacher performance have been the focus of numerous studies. Interpersonal communication skills play an important role in building good professional relationships and increasing organizational commitment (Gustari & Widodo, 2022; Teddy Roberto et al., 2022). Effective communication skills contribute to increased teacher job satisfaction (Andal & Lourdes, 2023).

Aspects of teacher motivation and emotional resilience have also received attention in recent research. Effective communication among educators can improve emotional well-being and resilience (Eadie et al., 2021). The quality of communication directly affects the level of teacher motivation by creating a supportive environment for professional growth (Rafiq et al., 2023). The importance of communication skills in managing classroom dynamics and teacher professional development (Khartha et al., 2022; N. Wang & Kang, 2023)

Although various studies have examined the relationship between communication and teacher performance, there is still a gap in understanding the role of interpersonal communication as a moderating

¹ Graduate School, Educational Management Doctoral Study Program, Universitas Negeri Semarang, email: dwiprasetyawati@students.unnes.ac.id

² Graduate School, Educational Administration, Universitas Negeri Semarang, email: fakhruddin@mail.unnes.ac.id

³ Faculty of Economics and Business Economics Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, email: kardoyo@mail.unnes.ac.id

⁴ Faculty of Education and Psychology Out-of-School Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, email: arbarini.mint@mail.unnes.ac.id

variable, especially in early childhood education. Previous research tends to place communication as an independent variable. At the same time, its potential as a moderator in the relationship between commitment, discipline, and motivation to teacher performance has not been explored in depth. The novelty of this study lies in developing a model that places interpersonal communication as a moderating variable, which can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of early childhood education performance. The urgency of this research is increasingly relevant, given the strategic role of ECD teachers in shaping the foundation of children's education. Based on this, this study aims to (1) analyze the significance of the effect of commitment on teacher performance with moderation of interpersonal communication; (2) examine the effect of discipline on performance with moderation of communication; (3) evaluate the effect of motivation on performance with moderation of communication; and (4) analyze the direct effect of these variables on early childhood education teacher performance.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Teacher Performance in Early Childhood Education

Teacher performance is an important determinant of student learning outcomes. Effective teaching, such as adaptive teaching and the use of nonverbal communication, increases student engagement and achievement (König et al., 2020; Naz, 2023). In addition, teachers' emotional intelligence plays an important role in fostering positive relationships between teachers and students, which in turn influences students' academic performance (Nwosu et al., 2023; Pattiasina et al., 2024). Teachers who demonstrate high emotional support and engagement levels can create a conducive learning environment, leading to improved student learning outcomes (L. Wang, 2022; T. Wang, 2023).

Commitment and Teacher Performance

A strong relationship between organizational commitment and teacher performance in schools, where committed teachers tend to show higher levels of performance (Mailool et al., 2020). Improving organizational commitment through effective management and engagement strategies can improve teacher performance (Soelistya, 2024). The interaction between these variables suggests that fostering a supportive organizational culture is critical to maximizing teacher effectiveness. Higher levels of organizational commitment among teachers will result in better performance outcomes. Organizational commitment predicts performance, suggesting committed teachers are more likely to perform effectively (Güler & Özgenel, 2023). Teachers with higher levels of commitment show better performance metrics (Mendoza, 2023). Organizational commitment is important in the educational environment (A. A. Khan et al., 2020).

Discipline and Teacher Performance

The relationship between teacher discipline and performance has been well documented in educational research. There is a positive correlation between teacher discipline and overall teacher performance. Teacher discipline has a positive impact on teacher performance (Muslih et al., 2023; Sahadi et al., 2021). In addition, the role of school leadership in fostering a disciplined environment is critical. Effective leadership provides the necessary support and recognition, which in turn improves teacher discipline and performance (Agustyawati & Farisatma, 2024). Disciplined teachers are more likely to show higher levels of performance, indicating that discipline is an important factor in educational effectiveness (Irfan rahman, 2023).

Motivation and Teacher Performance

Various motivational factors significantly influence teacher performance. Work motivation accounts for most of the variance in teacher performance, with studies showing that intrinsic motivation, driven by personal satisfaction and professional growth, plays an important role in improving teaching effectiveness. (Abidogun & Mumuni, 2023; Chomarindariyana et al., 2021; Ismawati et al., 2023). In addition, the principal's leadership style has been identified as an important factor that can increase or decrease teacher motivation, thereby affecting overall performance (Hasan et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2022).

In addition, external factors such as organizational culture and professional development opportunities also contribute to teacher motivation, which in turn affects their commitment and effectiveness in the classroom (Ismawati et al., 2023; Stumbrienė et al., 2024; Yadi, 2022). A positive school climate fosters motivation, encourages teachers to engage more deeply with students, and improves instructional practices (Chomarindariyana et al., 2021; Marques et al., 2020).

Interpersonal Communication and Teacher Performance

Interpersonal communication significantly affects teacher performance and student learning outcomes in educational settings. Effective communication skills enable teachers to foster positive relationships with students, which is critical to increasing student engagement and motivation (Khartha et al., 2022; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Research shows strong teacher-student relationships correlate with improved academic performance and a supportive learning environment (Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; Shakir, 2023; Zhang, 2021). In addition, teachers who use verbal and non-verbal communication effectively can create a more interesting classroom atmosphere, thereby increasing student participation and learning outcomes (Farid et al., 2023; Sierito, 2023).

In addition, the impact of a teacher's communication style also extends to managing classroom dynamics and meeting students' needs effectively. Teachers who demonstrate warmth and openness in communication are more likely to foster a sense of belonging among students, which is critical to mental health and academic success (Y. Li, 2024; Saputra & Anthony, 2021). Conversely, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings and disengagement, which adversely affects teacher performance and student achievement (Cai, 2021; Yusri et al., 2024). Therefore, fostering effective interpersonal communication is essential for educators who want to optimize teaching effectiveness and support student development.

This study will use statistical analysis to test the above hypotheses and evaluate how commitment, motivation, and discipline affect teacher performance with moderation of interpersonal communication. The research conceptual framework is a collection of attributes that provide an overview of the research. The conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.

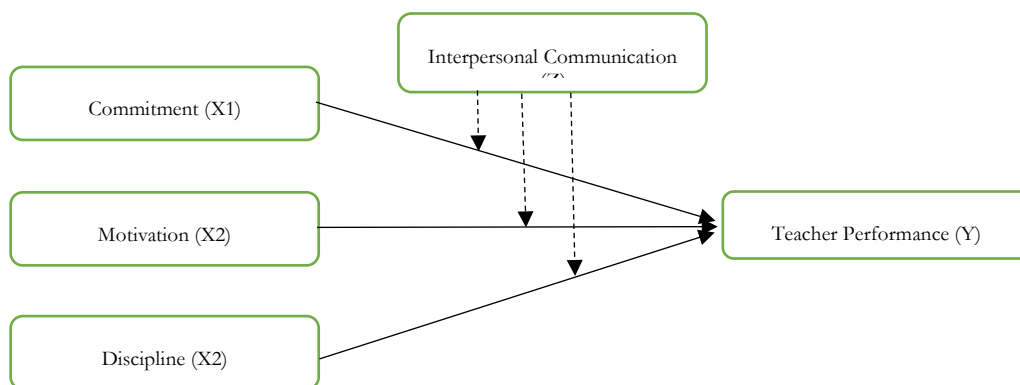


Figure 1 Conceptual Research

The research constructs show that Commitment, Motivation, and Discipline play a role in teacher performance moderated by interpersonal communication. The research hypothesis is:

H₁: Commitment affects teacher performance

H₂: Discipline affects teacher performance

H₃: Motivation affects teacher performance

H₄: Interpersonal Communication affects teacher performance

H₅: Discipline moderated by interpersonal communication affects teacher performance

H₆: Commitment moderated by interpersonal communication affects teacher performance

H₇: Motivation moderated by interpersonal communication affects teacher performance

Method

Research Design

The research design uses quantitative with explanatory type. A good research design is the key to collecting relevant data and testing the proposed hypothesis. The main objective of research on the effect of commitment, discipline, and motivation on Early childhood education teacher performance with interpersonal communication as a moderating variable is to identify and measure these relationships using SmartPLS analysis.

Sample and Data Collection Techniques

The research population consists of all early childhood education teachers in Semarang City, totaling 1,394 educators. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, resulting in 313 early childhood educators as respondents. The sampling criteria are:

1. Teachers must work at institutions with at least a B accreditation
2. Teachers must be actively teaching at the time of research
3. Teachers must have relevant educational qualifications

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study used SmartPLS through several systematic stages. The analysis begins with an outer model evaluation, which includes testing convergent validity by examining the outer loading value (threshold > 0.7) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5), followed by an assessment of discriminant validity and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha (threshold > 0.6) and Composite Reliability (threshold > 0.7). An inner model analysis was then conducted to assess the predictive ability of the structural model through R-square evaluation, where values above 0.75 indicate strong predictive power, above 0.50 indicate moderate prediction, and above 0.25 indicate weak prediction. The analysis also includes an F-square evaluation to measure effect size, with values above 0.02 indicating a small effect, above 0.15 indicating a moderate effect, and above 0.35 indicating a significant impact. For hypothesis testing, this study utilized path coefficient analysis, examined direct effects and moderating effects, and conducted bootstrapping procedures for significance testing with a p-value threshold of 0.05. This research model specifically examines the direct relationship between the independent variables and teacher performance, the moderating effect of interpersonal communication, and the total effect (consisting of direct and indirect effects) of the variables on performance.

Result

This study used the SmartPLS method to examine the relationship between commitment, motivation, discipline, interpersonal communication, and early childhood education teacher performance. The analysis was conducted through several stages of model testing.

*Measurement Model Assessment Uji Validitas dan Reliability***Table 1 Construct Reliability and Validity**

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
DC	0,856	0,860	0,897	0,636
DC*IC	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
TP	0,901	0,903	0,919	0,558
IC	0,946	0,952	0,952	0,569
CM	0,918	0,919	0,930	0,525
CM*IC	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
MT	0,938	0,940	0,945	0,536
MT*IC	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

Convergent validity was tested where all items qualified with outer loading values above 0.7 and AVE values above 0.5, indicating that the model is convergently valid. The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values also showed good results (>0.7).

*Analysis Path Coefficient***Table 2 Model Regression Output**

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
CM -> TP	0,146	0,150	0,046	3,184	0,002
DC -> TP	0,291	0,289	0,042	6,876	0,000
MT -> TP	0,131	0,127	0,055	2,370	0,018
IC -> TP	0,304	0,308	0,046	6,559	0,000
DC*IC -> TP	0,129	0,125	0,042	3,081	0,002
CM*IC -> TP	-0,123	-0,123	0,045	2,755	0,006
MT*IC -> TP	0,109	0,113	0,052	2,097	0,036
R ² = 0,611, R Square Adjusted = 0,607					

The analysis results from the regression output show that commitment has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance (TP) with a coefficient of 0.146 ($p = 0.002$). This shows that the higher the management commitment, the better the teacher's performance. However, the effect of commitment is not as large as that of other variables. Discipline (DC) exerts a more significant influence on teacher performance with a coefficient of 0.291 ($p < 0.000$), indicating a significant and strong relationship. Discipline implemented in schools consistently supports significantly improved teacher performance. Motivation (MT) also significantly influences teacher performance with a coefficient of 0.131 ($p = 0.018$). Although the effect of motivation is not as great as discipline, it is still clear that teachers' motivation plays an important role in improving their performance.

The role of interpersonal communication (IC) as a moderating variable. Interpersonal communication strengthens or weakens the influence of other independent variables on teacher performance. Interpersonal communication's direct effect on teacher performance is quite significant, with a coefficient of 0.304 ($p < 0.000$), making it one of the most important factors in improving performance. As a moderating variable, the interaction between discipline and interpersonal communication (DC*IC) significantly positively affected teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.129 ($p = 0.002$). This suggests that teacher performance will improve significantly when school discipline is combined with effective interpersonal

communication. However, the interaction between commitment and interpersonal communication (CM*IC) negatively affected teacher performance, with a coefficient of -0.123 ($p = 0.006$). This could indicate that under certain conditions, too high commitment without the support of good communication can cause tension or conflict, thus negatively affecting teacher performance. The interaction between motivation and interpersonal communication (MT*IC) showed a significant positive effect with a coefficient of 0.109 ($p = 0.036$). This means that teacher motivation, supported by good interpersonal communication, can improve their performance.

The R-Square value of 0.611 indicates that 61.1% of the variation in teacher performance can be explained by commitment, discipline, motivation, and interpersonal communication, including the moderating effect of interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, 38.9% of the variation in teacher performance is caused by other factors not included in this model. Overall, interpersonal communication plays an important role as a moderating variable, strengthening the influence of discipline and motivation on teacher performance, but also potentially having a negative effect when combined with commitment that is not balanced by effective communication.

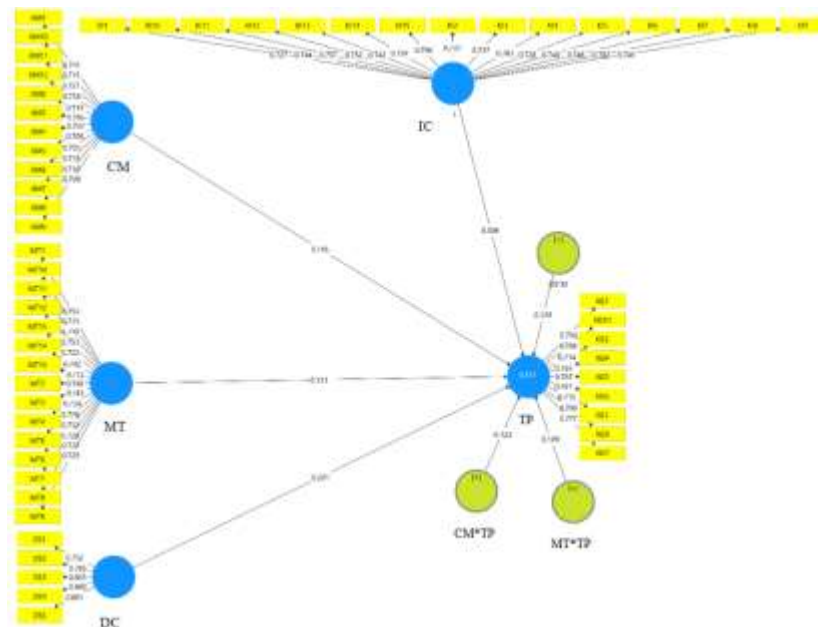


Figure 2 Path diagram output

Based on the path diagram shown, there are several significant relationships between the main variables in this model, namely commitment (CM), motivation (MT), discipline (DC), interpersonal communication (IC) as a moderating variable, and teacher performance (TP). Commitment (CM) positively influences teacher performance (TP) with a coefficient of 0.146 . This indicates that the higher the teacher commitment, the better the performance. Although the effect is positive, the level of influence of commitment is relatively lower than that of discipline and interpersonal communication. Motivation (MT) also positively influences teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.131 . This means that teachers' motivation encourages an increase in their performance, although the effect is also smaller than discipline and interpersonal communication. Discipline (DC) showed the most significant influence on teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.291 . This indicates that a high level of discipline among teachers significantly improves their performance. Interpersonal communication (IC) has a very strong direct influence on teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.304 . Good interpersonal communication among teachers or between teachers and school management significantly impacts teacher performance.

As a moderating variable, the interaction between discipline and interpersonal communication (DC*IC) positively affects teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.129 . This suggests that teacher performance will improve when discipline is combined with effective interpersonal communication. The interaction

between commitment and interpersonal communication (CM*IC) negatively affected teacher performance, with a coefficient of -0.123. This negative effect can be interpreted as the fact that even though teacher commitment is high, if interpersonal communication does not go well, then this commitment can cause problems and reduce teacher performance. The interaction between motivation and interpersonal communication (MT*IC) shows a positive effect with a coefficient of 0.109. This means that teacher motivation and good interpersonal communication can improve teacher performance.

This model shows that discipline and interpersonal communication are the two most powerful factors affecting teacher performance. Meanwhile, interpersonal communication is a moderating variable that can strengthen or weaken the influence of commitment, discipline, and motivation on teacher performance. The R-Square value of 0.611 indicates that this model can explain 61.1% of the variation in teacher performance, while the rest is influenced by other factors not included in the model.

Discussion of Research Results

Direct Effect of Independent Variables

The results of the analysis show that commitment has a positive and significant effect on the performance of early childhood education teachers. However, the effect is less dominant than the discipline and interpersonal communication variables. Commitment significantly affects teacher performance, as evidenced by various studies. High organizational commitment among teachers positively correlates with their performance, leading to increased job satisfaction and decreased absenteeism (Junaris, 2023; Nazim et al., 2024; Wullur & Werang, 2020). Teachers with high levels of commitment are likelier to engage in behaviors that promote school success and quality service delivery (Mailool et al., 2020; Muhammad Shohib et al., 2024; Nazim et al., 2023). In addition, research shows that committed teachers are more likely to invest time and effort in teaching responsibilities, thereby improving student learning outcomes (Bading, 2023; Siri et al., 2020).

Discipline emerged as the factor with the strongest influence among the independent variables. This strong and significant relationship demonstrates that the level of teacher discipline substantially impacts teacher performance. Muslih et al. found that work discipline positively affects teacher performance (Muslih et al., 2023). Discipline is a priority for principals who aim to improve teacher performance (Afjur et al., 2023). In addition, self-discipline among teachers is essential for performance improvement (Djazilan et al., 2022). This is in line with the findings that show a significant positive influence between discipline and teacher performance (Sahadi et al., 2021). Effective leadership and a supportive organizational culture can increase the impact of discipline on teacher performance (Daheri et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023).

Regarding motivation, the results confirm a significant positive influence on teacher performance. Motivation is an important factor in improving teacher performance, as it directly affects teaching success and teachers' commitment to the profession (Dikmen et al., 2023; B. Li, 2023; Soraya et al., 2022). Intrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies and foster a positive learning environment, which in turn increases student motivation and academic achievement (Aelterman et al., 2019; Sun, 2021). Increasing teachers' intrinsic motivation through practices that support autonomy and recognize teachers' contributions (Zhao et al., 2024) is critical to maintaining high educational standards and improving overall teacher performance in the classroom (Alimmudin, 2022; X. Wang et al., 2024).

Moderating Effect of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication showed the strongest direct effect on teacher performance, positioning it as the most influential factor in this study. Effective teacher-student relationships foster engagement and increase instructional effectiveness, creating a conducive learning environment (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Positive interpersonal communication research correlates with improved teacher performance (Bahri et al., 2022; Melianah et al., 2021). Interpersonal communication's dynamic nature facilitates collaboration and professional growth among educators (A. Samad et al., 2023; Novianti et al., 2023; Q. Zhang, 2022). In its role as a moderator, interpersonal communication exerts a significant positive moderating effect on the

discipline-performance relationship. Research shows that effective communication enhances the impact of discipline on performance outcomes (Siburian et al., 2023).

Interpersonal communication shows a negative moderating effect on the relationship between commitment and performance. Effective interpersonal communication can increase organizational commitment (Balakrishnan et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2020). However, the quality of interpersonal relationships can also be complicated when poor communication leads to misunderstandings and conflict (Ramaditya et al., 2020; Szostek, 2019; Tayal & Sharma, 2021). This highlights the dual nature of interpersonal communication as both a facilitator and a potential barrier to performance (Singh et al., 2023).

On the motivation-performance relationship, interpersonal communication showed a positive moderating effect. Effective interpersonal communication increases intrinsic motivation, which has a positive effect on performance (Nguyen et al., 2019; Udin, 2023). Positive motivational behavior from superiors can increase the intrinsic motivation of subordinates (Dede & Kuşakçı, 2022; Ryu & Moon, 2019). Conversely, ineffective communication can reduce employee motivation, while optimal communication amplifies the effects of motivation on performance (Wahyuningsih et al., 2024).

Model Explanatory Power

The model shows substantial explanatory power in that variation in early childhood education teacher performance can be explained by a combination of the variables studied, including the moderating effect of interpersonal communication. Although other factors outside the model explain variation, this explanation suggests that the research model has successfully identified the key factors that influence early childhood education teacher performance.

Conclusion

The results showed that commitment, discipline, and motivation significantly influence early childhood education teacher performance, with interpersonal communication moderating the relationship. The research revealed that highly committed, disciplined, and motivated teachers perform better, especially when supported by effective interpersonal communication. The interpersonal communication construct proved appropriate as a moderating variable, indicated through adequate loading factor and cross-loading results. However, this study has limitations on optimizing the interpersonal communication construct, where only certain statement attributes suit the respondents, indicating the need for further development in measuring and implementing interpersonal communication aspects. For future research, adding the loyalty construct to the model framework is recommended to improve the role of bootstrapping and estimation models. For early childhood education institutions, efforts are needed to maintain interpersonal communication aspects related to commitment, discipline, and motivation, as well as to increase the role of communication management to maintain and improve teacher performance.

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