

The Role of Organizational Communication in Member Loyalty within Educational Communities

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Abstract. Organizational communication has been widely associated with member loyalty, yet its specific role in sustaining educational communities remains insufficiently synthesized, particularly across schools, educational institutions, and student organizations. This study addresses this gap by examining how communication patterns strengthen loyalty in educational community contexts. Using a descriptive documentary-review design, this article reviews relevant studies selected purposively based on their focus on organizational communication, member loyalty, educational organizations, and community participation. The sources were analyzed through thematic synthesis by categorizing communication forms, loyalty indicators, and communication barriers. The analysis shows that clear, open, participatory, and two-way communication strengthens trust, emotional attachment, organizational commitment, and active participation. Formal communication supports task clarity, coordination, and accountability, while informal communication reinforces solidarity and a sense of belonging. The study's contribution lies in framing organizational communication not only as an administrative function but also as a relational infrastructure that sustains loyalty in educational communities. These findings imply that educational leaders and community managers should develop transparent information systems, participatory communication spaces, and inclusive informal interaction to maintain member engagement and organizational continuity.

Keywords: *organizational communication; member loyalty; educational community; internal communication; organizational commitment*

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Introduction

Educational communities are sustained not only by formal structures, curricula, or administrative regulations, but also by the quality of relationships among the individuals who participate in them. Schools, quality assurance institutions, student organizations, pesantren-based educational units, and other learning communities depend on members who are willing to cooperate, accept shared responsibilities, and remain committed to collective goals. In this context, member loyalty is a central organizational resource because it reflects the willingness of individuals to protect, support, and advance the community beyond the minimum requirements of formal membership. Loyalty is therefore not limited to physical presence or routine compliance; it involves psychological attachment, perceived belonging, trust, and a readiness to contribute to organizational continuity (Iskandar, 2021; Setiawan, 2018).

The issue of loyalty is particularly relevant in educational communities because such communities are built around long-term social and developmental goals. Unlike purely transactional organizations, educational organizations require sustained participation, mutual care, and collective commitment. Teachers, students, administrators, volunteers, and student-organization members are expected to exchange ideas, solve problems, coordinate activities, and maintain shared values. When members are loyal, they tend to demonstrate discipline, responsibility, active involvement, and a willingness to prioritize organizational interests over narrow personal interests. Conversely, declining loyalty may appear in the form of absenteeism, reduced participation, weak responsibility, passive attitudes toward organizational programs, and low initiative for innovation (Audi & Prihantoro, 2021; Christanto & Kadarusman, 2021).

In practice, loyalty does not emerge spontaneously. It is shaped through repeated experiences of interaction in which members evaluate whether the organization recognizes their voices, provides clear information, treats them fairly, and offers a meaningful place for participation. One of the most decisive mechanisms in this process is organizational communication. Communication is a basic human activity and a constitutive element of organizational life because it enables members to create, interpret, and coordinate meanings within a network of interdependent relationships (Asriadi, 2020). In an organization, communication does not merely transmit information; it produces shared understanding, regulates behavior, coordinates tasks, manages uncertainty, and maintains social bonds among members (Putra et al., 2024).

Organizational communication can be understood as a continuous process of creating and exchanging messages within formal and informal relationships. It includes downward

communication from leaders to members, upward communication from members to leaders, and horizontal communication among individuals occupying relatively equal organizational positions. Downward communication helps leaders explain policy, clarify roles, set expectations, and provide feedback. Upward communication gives members the opportunity to report difficulties, offer suggestions, and participate in decision making. Horizontal communication supports coordination, problem solving, and peer solidarity. These directions are not separate technical channels; they work together to form the communicative climate of the organization (Iskandar, 2021; Kartini et al., 2024).

In educational communities, communication also has formal and informal dimensions. Formal communication appears in meetings, official announcements, written policies, memos, academic reports, evaluation forums, and structured coordination among organizational units. Informal communication appears in interpersonal conversations, peer discussions, digital group chats, shared social activities, and spontaneous exchanges outside official forums. Both forms are important. Formal communication provides clarity and accountability, while informal communication strengthens emotional closeness and social support. Studies on internal communication have shown that member satisfaction with communication channels is closely related to the perceived quality of communication and, ultimately, to engagement and commitment (Tkalac Vercic & Spoljaric, 2020; Nadales-Gallego et al., 2025).

The theoretical importance of organizational communication can also be explained through open systems theory. From this perspective, an organization is not an isolated and static entity but a dynamic social system that continuously interacts with its environment. Educational communities receive inputs in the form of information, expectations, policies, resources, and social demands; they transform these inputs through internal coordination and collective activities; and they produce outputs such as educational programs, services, member development, and community impact. Feedback then returns to the system and influences future action (Azkiya et al., 2025). Organizational communication is the mechanism through which this cycle operates. Without effective communication, inputs become unclear, internal processes become fragmented, and feedback fails to support organizational adaptation.

The relevance of communication becomes more visible when educational organizations face uncertainty, change, or conflict. Members may interpret organizational decisions differently, experience unequal access to information, or feel excluded from decision-making processes. Such conditions can create emotional distance and weaken loyalty. Conversely, transparent and participatory communication can reduce uncertainty and build trust because members

understand the reasons behind organizational decisions and feel that their perspectives are acknowledged. Kim (2021) emphasizes that strategic internal communication and quality organization-member relationships are important antecedents of organizational resilience. This argument is highly relevant for educational communities that must adapt to changing educational policies, digital communication patterns, and diverse member expectations.

Empirical findings in educational and organizational settings support this argument. Iskandar (2021) found that communication strategies in educational quality assurance institutions helped build employee loyalty by strengthening coordination, trust, and shared responsibility. Rahayu et al. (2019) showed that organizational communication had a positive and significant influence on teachers' organizational commitment in elementary schools. Zulkarnain and Ramadhani (2025) reported that organizational communication significantly affected member loyalty in a student organization, while the combined effect of organizational communication and religious leadership explained a large proportion of the variance in loyalty. These findings suggest that communication contributes to loyalty across different educational contexts, although the strength and pathways of the relationship may vary according to organizational structure and culture.

Recent studies broaden this evidence by linking internal communication to engagement, satisfaction, retention, and organizational commitment. Nguyen and Ha (2023), in a study of higher education institutions in Vietnam, demonstrated that internal communication interacts with employee engagement and job satisfaction in explaining employee loyalty. Tkalac Vercic and Men (2023) argued that the relationship between internal communication and engagement should be understood dynamically through mechanisms of organizational support, alignment, and member experience. Nadales-Gallego et al. (2025), through a systematic literature review, identified internal communication, employee engagement, and job satisfaction as interconnected research clusters. These findings indicate that loyalty is not an isolated outcome; it is embedded in a wider relational ecosystem shaped by communication quality.

In Indonesian educational communities, communication problems remain a practical challenge. The initial manuscript analyzed in this study describes recurring barriers such as differences in opinion, gaps in information, variations in communication style, weak coordination, limited openness, and insufficient leader capacity to build a clear communication direction. These problems are not merely technical; they may affect members' emotions and perceptions of fairness. When members feel that information is unclear or that their voices are not valued, they may experience alienation and gradually withdraw from organizational involvement. This

condition can reduce the effectiveness of decision making, weaken program implementation, and limit innovation within educational communities (Purba et al., 2025; Izandy & Rahman, 2024).

The relationship between communication and loyalty can be understood through several psychological and organizational mechanisms. First, open communication creates trust. Members are more likely to believe in organizational decisions when information is delivered clearly and consistently. Second, participatory communication creates ownership. When members are invited to provide input, they perceive themselves as meaningful contributors rather than passive recipients of commands. Third, horizontal communication creates solidarity by enabling members to support each other and solve problems collectively. Fourth, informal communication strengthens emotional attachment because it allows members to experience the organization as a social community, not merely a formal structure. These mechanisms explain why communication is repeatedly associated with loyalty, commitment, and participation (Audi & Prihantoro, 2021; Men & Yue, 2019; Zwolak et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, prior studies still leave several gaps. Many studies examine communication and loyalty in specific organizational settings, such as one school, one student organization, one company, or one educational institution. Fewer studies integrate findings across various types of educational communities and explain how communication works as a relational mechanism that connects formal coordination, informal interaction, emotional attachment, and long-term loyalty. In addition, some earlier discussions emphasize communication as an administrative process, whereas current organizational research increasingly views internal communication as a strategic asset for building engagement, resilience, and psychological connection (Kim, 2021; Tkalcic & Men, 2023). This conceptual shift is important because educational communities increasingly operate in environments characterized by digital communication, rapid organizational change, and heterogeneous member expectations.

Another gap concerns the distinction between communication effectiveness and communication climate. Effective communication is often defined in terms of message clarity, channel accuracy, and feedback. However, loyalty is also influenced by the emotional tone of communication: whether members feel safe, respected, listened to, and included. Thus, communication should not be evaluated only by whether information is delivered, but also by whether it builds relational quality. This distinction is essential in educational communities, where organizational outcomes depend heavily on voluntary participation, moral commitment, and shared identity. A technically accurate message can still fail to generate loyalty if it is delivered in a top-down, closed, or insensitive manner.

Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, this study aims to analyze the role of organizational communication in shaping member loyalty within educational communities. The study focuses on how communication openness, message clarity, participatory interaction, formal and informal communication, and communicative barriers influence members' trust, emotional attachment, participation, and commitment. The guiding research question is: How does organizational communication contribute to member loyalty in educational communities?

Methods

This study employed a descriptive documentary review design. The design was selected because the article aimed to synthesize and reinterpret documented evidence on organizational communication and member loyalty rather than collect new primary survey data. The reviewed materials consisted of academic journal articles, books, research reports, and empirical studies discussing organizational communication, internal communication, loyalty, organizational commitment, and educational-community participation.

The unit of analysis was the relationship between organizational communication and member loyalty in educational communities. Organizational communication was defined as the exchange of messages through formal and informal channels, including downward, upward, and horizontal communication. Its indicators included message clarity, openness, feedback, participatory interaction, coordination, and communication climate. Member loyalty was defined as psychological attachment and behavioral commitment to the organization, reflected in responsibility, active participation, discipline, willingness to maintain organizational reputation, and long-term commitment.

The inclusion criteria for the reviewed sources were as follows: (a) the source discussed organizational communication, internal communication, loyalty, commitment, engagement, or educational organizations; (b) the source provided conceptual or empirical relevance to educational communities; and (c) when additional references were used, priority was given to sources published within the last five years to strengthen the currency of the discussion. The analysis was conducted through content analysis and narrative synthesis. Relevant findings were extracted, grouped into themes, compared across contexts, and interpreted using organizational communication theory and open systems theory.

Results

The analysis identified four major findings. First, organizational communication consistently appeared as a positive factor in member loyalty and organizational commitment. Studies in schools, student organizations, and educational institutions showed that members were more likely to remain committed when communication was open, clear, and participatory. For example, Iskandar (2021) found that strategic communication helped build employee loyalty in an educational quality assurance institution, while Rahayu et al. (2019) reported a positive and significant effect of organizational communication on teacher commitment. Zulkarnain and Ramadhani (2025) also found that organizational communication significantly influenced member loyalty in KAMMI.

Second, formal and informal communication played different but complementary roles. Formal communication supported the distribution of tasks, policy understanding, accountability, and coordination. Informal communication strengthened interpersonal closeness, solidarity, and emotional attachment. This pattern was visible in studies on student organizations and educational institutions, where members' sense of belonging increased when formal instructions were supported by interpersonal interaction and opportunities for dialogue (Mulia & Maharani, 2023; Nurri & Imran, 2018).

Third, participatory and democratic communication emerged as an important predictor of active involvement. Purba et al. (2025) showed that a democratic communication pattern in the Haga Pendidikan Ono Niha community enabled members to express opinions, ideas, and criticism, which increased participation in educational programs. Similarly, Izandy and Rahman (2024) found that formal and informal communication practices in a school setting supported cooperation, problem solving, and a positive school culture. These findings suggest that loyalty increases when communication enables members to experience agency and social recognition.

Fourth, communication barriers reduced loyalty by weakening trust, coordination, and member participation. The most frequently identified barriers included limited openness, differences in communication styles, unequal understanding of information, weak coordination, and insufficient feedback. These barriers can produce misunderstanding and emotional distance between members and leaders. When such problems persist, members may become passive, less responsible, and less willing to contribute to organizational development.

Table 1.
Summary of Evidence on Organizational Communication and Loyalty

Source	Context	Main finding	Relevance to this study
Iskandar (2021)	Educational quality assurance institution	Communication strategy supported employee loyalty through coordination and trust.	Shows communication as a loyalty-building mechanism in education.
Rahayu et al. (2019)	Elementary school teachers	Organizational communication positively affected teacher commitment.	Links communication to commitment in school organizations.
Zulkarnain & Ramadhani (2025)	Student organization	Organizational communication significantly influenced member loyalty.	Supports the effect of communication in educational-community membership.
Purba et al. (2025)	Educational community program	Democratic communication increased participation and program development.	Highlights participatory communication and member involvement.
Nguyen & Ha (2023)	Higher education institutions	Internal communication interacted with engagement and job satisfaction in explaining loyalty.	Connects internal communication with loyalty in higher education.
Kim (2021)	Organizational resilience	Two-way strategic internal communication strengthened organization-member relationships.	Explains how communication builds resilience and long-term attachment.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that organizational communication influences member loyalty through both informational and relational pathways. Informationally, communication clarifies tasks, policies, expectations, and organizational goals. This clarity reduces uncertainty and allows members to understand how their roles contribute to the community. Relationally, communication builds trust, emotional attachment, and a sense of belonging. These relational effects are especially important in educational communities because members' participation often depends on moral commitment and shared identity rather than material incentives alone.

The results support organizational communication theory, which views communication as a constitutive process of organizing. Communication is not simply a tool used after organizational structures are created; it is one of the processes through which those structures become meaningful to members. Downward communication helps translate organizational vision into practical direction. Upward communication allows members to articulate needs, problems,

and suggestions. Horizontal communication creates peer coordination and mutual support. When these forms of communication operate together, they form a positive communication climate that encourages members to stay involved and loyal.

Open systems theory further explains why communication is essential for educational communities. Because educational organizations interact continuously with social, technological, and institutional environments, they need feedback loops to adapt. Communication enables the organization to absorb information from members, respond to internal problems, and adjust programs. If communication is closed or one-directional, feedback becomes weak and the organization may fail to recognize declining participation or dissatisfaction. In contrast, transparent and participatory communication allows educational communities to remain adaptive and resilient (Azkiya et al., 2025; Kim, 2021).

The findings also indicate that loyalty should not be reduced to obedience. Members may comply with rules without developing psychological attachment. Genuine loyalty emerges when members feel that they are respected, informed, trusted, and invited to contribute. This explains why participatory communication and informal interaction are important. Formal communication may ensure order, but informal communication helps create emotional connection. In educational communities, leaders therefore need to combine structured communication systems with relational sensitivity, including active listening, dialogic forums, peer communication, and transparent feedback mechanisms.

A key implication is that leaders in educational communities should move beyond a command-oriented communication model. A more effective approach is dialogic and democratic communication, in which information flows in multiple directions and members are treated as contributors to organizational meaning. Practical strategies may include regular reflection meetings, transparent digital information channels, participatory decision-making forums, peer coordination groups, and conflict-resolution procedures. These strategies can reduce misunderstanding, strengthen coordination, and build the emotional conditions necessary for loyalty.

Despite its contribution, this study has limitations. The analysis relies on secondary data and documented studies, so it cannot measure the direct causal effect of organizational communication on member loyalty in a new empirical sample. Differences in organizational context, population, measurement instruments, and research design across reviewed studies may also affect comparability. Future studies should use validated questionnaires, larger samples, and statistical models such as multiple regression or structural equation modeling to test how specific

dimensions of communication influence loyalty. Qualitative interviews may also be useful for understanding members lived experiences of communication, belonging, and commitment within educational communities.

Conclusion

Organizational communication is a strategic relational foundation for member loyalty in educational communities because it shapes how members understand organizational goals, experience recognition, build trust, and decide to sustain their participation. Clear, open, two-way, and participatory communication strengthens loyalty by connecting formal coordination with emotional belonging, whereas weak and closed communication creates distance, misunderstanding, and declining commitment. Therefore, educational communities need to develop communication systems that are transparent, dialogic, inclusive, and responsive to members' needs so that loyalty can grow as a genuine commitment to shared educational purposes rather than as mere formal attachment to organizational membership.

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