



How to cite this article :

Oo, T. N., & Wai, H. H. (2020). Relationship Between Principals' Communication Style And School Climate. *Journal of Education and Human Resources*, 1(1), 1-11

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION STYLE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

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Received: 12/09/2019 Revised: 14/12/2019 Accepted: 19/01/2019 Published: 10/2/2020

### Abstract

*The objectives of this research are to study the prominent communication styles of principals, to study the types of school climate and to investigate relationship between principals' communication style and school climate in Basic Education High Schools, Sittwe Township, Rakhine State. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. Principals' communication style was investigated with seven dimensions of the lexical side of communication styles developed by de Vries et al. (2009). School climate was studied based on five dimensions of Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Secondary School (OCDQ-RS) developed by Hoy et al. (1991). 176 teachers from selected Basic Education High Schools participated in this study. Descriptive statistics, Independent Samples t Test, and One-Way ANOVA, and Pearson Correlation were used in this study. The findings indicated that the three principals of School A, B and C practiced most expressiveness style. Niceness was the prominent style in School D and preciseness was the prominent style in School E perceived by teachers. There was no significant difference in principals' communication styles grouped by gender. It was found that the four schools of A, B, C, and E had closed climate while School D had an open climate. There were no significant differences in teachers' perceptions on school climate grouped by gender, position, and years of teaching service. There was positively moderate relationship ( $r=.522^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) between principals' communication style and school climate.*

**Keywords:** Principals' Communication Style, School Climate.

## INTRODUCTION

The world of today is constantly changing and there are many challenges. To overcome these challenges and to be a civilized society, education can only achieve. Thus, people need a good education to be able to survive in modern world. Basically, schools are institutions where students come to learn what society wants them to contribute to their advancement and development. Freiberg and Stein (1999) claimed that the climate of the school is the "heart and soul" of a school, the factor that motivates students, teachers and makes them to want it and willing to be there every day. Thacker and Malnerney (1992) found principals play a key role in the effort to improve school climate. A school climate is a reflection of the principal's leadership. One type of leadership behaviour is leadership communication. Communication in school takes place at all times, in all directions and in many ways. Lawler, Hall, and Oldham (1974) stated that "The communication patterns used by the organization has an immediate impact upon the individual's life within that some organization and may be a vital aspect of organizational climate". Therefore, it is well known that effective communication is the main key for success of any relationship.

Communication is all around us in our life. In all school activities, communication plays an important role. Hersey and Blanchard (1993) described that "leaders spend more time communication than doing other single activity". Principals are mainly concerned with the overall school climate. Effective principal communication style in a school plays a major role on the level of work. Moreover, communication is the strongest instrument a leader or a manager can force or put down if they know how to use it. In education, effective communication is needed for all to improve their work in line with general educational requirements in order to achieve school goals. An unhealthy school climate can lead to ineffective. It is extremely important that the principal should discover the positive climate of a school. The better the school climate, the higher the student achievement. This study examined the communication styles practiced by school principal and their relationships to school climate. Therefore, the result of this study may provide the importance and how impact on organization.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research study is concerned with principals' communication style and school climate. Principals' communication style was investigated with seven dimensions of the lexical side of communication styles developed by de Vries et al. (2009). These seven dimensions of lexical side of communication styles are (1) expressiveness, (2) preciseness, (3) niceness, (4) supportiveness, (5) reflectiveness, (6) threateningness, and (7) emotionality. The dimensions of a lexical study of communication styles are details as follow;

### **Expressiveness Style**

Expressiveness seems to refer to the (non- and para-) verbal manifestation of extraversion. An expressive person is fun loving, informal, and always takes part to the conversations. Their way of talking is very helping, full of humor, and extroverted. Expressiveness is concerned verbs and adjectives that signify talkativeness, certainty, energy, eloquent, and extroverted.

### **Preciseness Style**

Preciseness, with its focus on the way somebody structures his/her communication, is probably most closely related to conscientiousness. It mainly consists of adjectives, and it

correlations with the adjectives and verbs factors reflects its adjectival content. It refers to clarify, conciseness, efficiency, composure, professional, expert, and precise.

### **Niceness Style**

Niceness, nice and soft-hearted versus to put someone in the wrong and to keep harking on something. It consists of adjectives and verbs that reflect general communication attitude and its meaning can be seen through friendliness, uncriticalness, modesty, and cheerfully.

### **Supportiveness Style**

Supportiveness refers to comfort someone and to put someone in the limelight versus sarcastic and cynical. It is more of a reactive factor, mainly verbs denote how one reacts to someone else. Thus, supportiveness reflects the actual communication behaviour. It consists of verbs of a relational response which include accommodation, supportiveness, stimulation, and admiration.

### **Reflectiveness Style**

Reflectiveness refers to dissect oneself, to dissent something or someone versus coolly and formal. Reflectiveness factor is clearly a smaller factor, consisting both verbs and adjectives that refer to engagement, analytical reflectiveness, and philosophical or poetic communication behaviours.

### **Threateningness Style**

Threateningness, refers to abuse someone, to bark at someone, to threaten someone. It consists mainly of verbs that refer to abuse, threateningness, and deceptiveness. Although it is both related to the adjectives and verbs factors, its highest loading terms are all verbs with strong negative connotations.

### **Emotionality Style**

Emotionality seems to reflect the components sadness, irritability, anger, and tension. People who use emotionality as their communication style are emotional and sentimental, and are defensive and try to deal things emotionality. The highest loading terms are all adjectives. It consists of piqued, stressed, sad, and bad-tempered.

School climate was studied based on five dimensions of Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Secondary School (OCDQ-RS) developed by Hoy et al. (1991). These five dimensions were divided into two categories: two of dimensions described principal behaviour (1) supportive principal behaviour and (2) directive principal behaviour, the other three focused on teacher behaviour (1) engaged teacher behaviour, (2) frustrated teacher behaviour, and (3) intimate teacher behaviour.

### **Principal's Behaviour**

Supportive principal behaviour is characterized by efforts to motivate teachers by using constructive criticism and setting an example through hard work. At the same time, the principal is helpful and genuinely concerned with the personal and professional welfare of teachers. Supportive behaviour is directed towards both the social needs and task achievement of the faculty.

**Directive principal behaviour** is rigid and domineering supervision. The principal maintains close and constant monitoring of all teachers and school activities down to the smallest detail.

### **Teachers' Behaviours**

**Engaged teacher behaviour** is reflected by high faculty morale. Teachers are proud of their school, enjoy working with each other, supportive of their colleagues. Teachers are not only concerned about each other, they are committed to the success of their students. They are friendly with students, trust students, and are optimistic about the ability of students to succeed.

**Frustrated teacher behaviour** refers to a general pattern of interference from both administration and colleagues that distracts from the basic task of teaching. Routine duties, administrative paper work, and assigned nonteaching duties are excessive; moreover, teachers irritate, annoy, and interrupt each other.

**Intimate teacher behaviour** reflects a strong and cohesive network of social relations among the faculty. Teachers know each other well, are close personal friends, and regularly socialize together.

### **Types of School Climate**

#### ***Open Climate***

Open climate of the school is chiefly associated with its expressive characteristics. The principal listens and is open to teacher suggestions, gives genuine and frequent praise, and respects the professional competence of the faculty (high supportiveness). Principals also give their teachers freedom to perform without close scrutiny (low directiveness). Teachers support open and professional behaviour (high engagedness) among teachers, they cooperate and are committed to their job and teaching. Teachers find the working environment facilitating rather than frustrating (low frustrating). Teachers know each other well and are close friends (high intimacy).

#### ***Closed Climate***

The closed climate is virtually the antithesis of the open climate. The principal's ineffective leadership is seen as controlling and rigid (high directiveness) as well as unsympathetic, unconcerned, and unresponsive (low supportiveness). The teachers' support is not open and non-professional behaviour (low engagedness) among them prevails. Teachers find the working environment frustrating rather than facilitating (high frustrating). These misguided tactics are accompanied not only by frustration and apathy but also by suspicion and a lack of respect of teachers for their colleagues as well as the administration (low intimacy).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Quantitative Study**

#### **Sample**

Five Basic Education High Schools were taken as sample by using purposive sampling method based on the schools with all three levels such as Primary Teachers (PT), Junior Teachers (JT), and Senior Teachers (ST). Participants chosen for this study consisted of 176 teachers (PT, JT and ST) from selected five Basic Education High Schools in Sittwe Township. Demographic information about teachers was described in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Demographic Information about Teachers

		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	16	9%
	Female	160	91%
<b>Age</b>	18-42	90	51%
	43-65	86	49%
<b>Academic Qualification</b>	Under Graduate	7	4%
	B.A/B.Sc	122	69%
	B.Ed/B.A,B.Ed/B.Sc,B.Ed	47	27%
<b>Position</b>	PT	23	13%

	JT	106	60%
	ST	47	27%
<b>Years of Teaching Service</b>	1-3	54	31%
	4-6	55	31%
	7-18	47	27%
	19 and above	20	11%
	Total	176	100%

Demographic variables that were measured from the teachers were their background in the terms of gender, age, academic qualification, position, and years of teaching service.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire included two sections; principals' communication style items and the items to assess the school climate. The researcher developed and modified the principals' communication style items by using a Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree) based on the lexical side of communication (de Vries et al., 2009). It consisted of seven dimensions; expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness, reflectiveness, threateningness, and emotionality. There are four items in each dimension. Thus, the number of total items was 28.

The second part of the questionnaire included the school climate items. They were developed and modified by the researcher based on the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Secondary School (OCDQ-RS). It consisted of five dimensions which are divided into two categories; principal behaviour and teacher behaviour. There were six items in each dimension and the total number of items was 30. These items were of four point Likert scales. Likert items were modified as 1= rarely occurs, 2= sometimes occurs, 3= often occurs, 4= very frequently occurs.

### **Instrument Validity**

In order to obtain content validity of questionnaire for principals' communication style and school climate, the advice and guidance were taken from twelve expert educators who have special knowledge and experiences in the field of this study from Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education.

### **Instrument Reliability**

The researcher did the pilot study in Basic Education High School No. (2), Kamaryuat Township, Yangon Region. Forty responses were collected and analyzed using the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient in SPSS version 25 to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient for principals' communication style is 0.88 and that of school climate is 0.75. Therefore, this questionnaire was reliable to use in this study.

### **Procedure**

Firstly, related literature was reviewed and, the instrument was constructed to collect the required data. After developing the questionnaire, it was reviewed by experienced members of educational theory. They were twelve experts who have sound and special knowledge and were closely familiarized with this area from the Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education. After that, some of the items were modified. And then, the pilot study was conducted in the third week of September to approve the developed questionnaire. It produced the reliability of the items.

After getting all the approvals needed, the sample was selected from five Basic Education High Schools in Sittwe Township, Rakhine State. The questionnaires were distributed in the

second week of December, 2018 among teachers in selected schools to collect the required data. One hundred and seventy six teachers from five selected schools were distributed the questionnaires. After one week later, distributed questionnaires were collected again. Total number of participants was 176 and valid response rate was 100%. Later on, the data were analyzed by using SPSS version 25.

### **Analysis of Data**

The obtained data from questionnaires were coded, entered into a computer, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 25 to attain the final results for each of the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used to tabulate means and standard deviations for group of items. The prominent communication styles of principals were determined by the highest mean value of the communication style. The type of school climate was measured by the principal openness score and teacher openness score.

Independent Samples *t* Test was used in comparing the gender difference of principals and teachers. And to determine whether there were significant differences by position and years of teaching service, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. Moreover, in order to investigate whether there was significant relationship between principals' communication style and school climate, Pearson product-moment Correlation was used.

### **Qualitative Study**

According to the related literature review, five open-ended questions were constructed in order to obtain in depth information. One opened-ended question was used as qualitative method to investigate the prominent communication styles of the principals based on the teachers' perceptions. Four open-ended questions were used to study the teachers' perceptions on types of school climate.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As quantitative studies, descriptive statistics mean values and standard deviations, Independent Samples *t* Test, One-way ANOVA and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to investigate the relationship between principals' communication style and school climate. The findings of open-ended questions were also presented in this chapter as qualitative studies.

### **Question (1): What are the prominent communication styles of principals based on teachers' perceptions?**

**Table 2**  
**Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Prominent Communication Styles in Basic Education High Schools, Sittwe Township**

No.	School	Mean(SD)	Principal's Prominent Communication Style
1.	A	3.38(.72)	Expressiveness Style
2.	B	3.40(.90)	Expressiveness Style
3.	C	3.91(.41)	Expressiveness Style
4.	D	4.04(.49)	Niceness Style
5.	E	4.04(.34)	Preciseness Style

According to teachers' perceptions, the prominent communication styles practiced by their principals in each school were described in Table 2. The expressiveness style could be found the

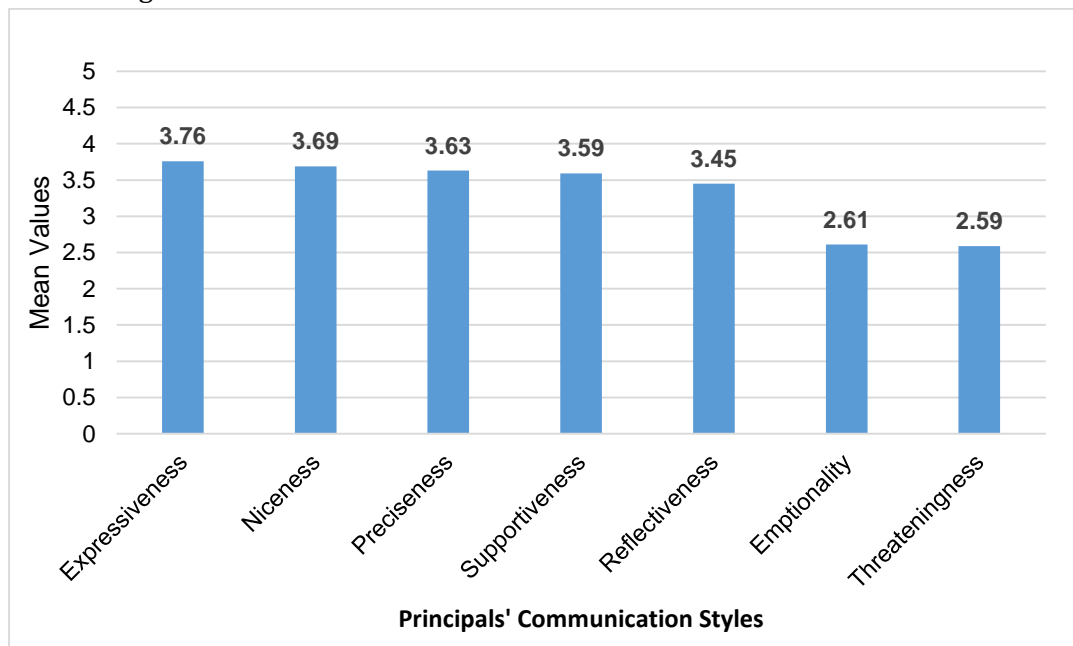
prominent style in school A, B, and C. But the niceness style was the prominent style in School D and school E principal practiced most the preciseness style.

**Table 3**

Mean Values and Standard Deviations Showing Ranked Principals' Communication Styles of Basic Education High Schools in Sittwe Township (N=176)

No.	Communication Style	Mean	SD
1.	Expressiveness	3.76	.64
2.	Niceness	3.69	.72
3.	Preciseness	3.63	.76
4.	Supportiveness	3.59	.83
5.	Reflectiveness	3.45	.79
6.	Emotionality	2.61	.92
7.	Threateningness	2.59	.71

Communication styles of the principals in Basic Education High Schools, Sittwe Township were described in figure 1.



**Figure 1**

Principals' Communication Styles in Basic Education High Schools, Sittwe Township

In comparing mean values of communication styles of principals grouped by gender, the group of female principals had higher mean values than the group of male principals in all types of communication style except preciseness style.

To find out the significant difference between the group of female principals and the group of male principals, Independent Samples *t* Test was used. The results showed that there was no significant difference in communication styles of principals grouped by gender.

Question (2): What are the types of school climate based on teachers' perceptions?

**Table 4**  
The Standardized Scores and Climate Index of all five  
Basic Education High Schools Measured by OCDQ-RS

School	Behaviour Dimensions					Openness Index	Type of Climate
	Supportive	Directive	Engaged	Frustrated	Intimate		
A	455	468	444	525	432	476 (Slightly below average)	Closed Climate
B	499	528	470	554	470	471 (Below average)	Closed Climate
C	517	494	491	504	513	502 (Average)	Closed Climate
D	527	482	543	467	537	<b>530 (Above average)</b>	<b>Open Climate</b>
E	536	549	547	500	538	508 (Average)	Closed Climate

OCDQ-RS = Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Secondary Schools  
Openness Index:

Below 400	= Very low,
400-449	= Low,
450-475	= Below average,
476-489	= Slightly below average,
490-510	= Average,
511-524	= Slightly above average,
525-550	= Above average,
551-600	=High,
Above 600	=Very high

According to Table 4, the climate measured by OCDQ-RS in all five schools was perceived as closed climate except climate of School D, which was described as open climate.

When analyzing whether there were significant differences in teachers perceptions on school climate behaviour grouped by gender, Independent Samples *t* Test was used. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the group of male teachers and the group of female teachers.

When studying teachers' perceptions on school climate behaviour grouped by positions and years of teaching service, One-Way ANOVA was used. By the result of One-Way ANOVA, there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions on school climate behaviour grouped by position and years of teaching service in education.



Question (3): Is there any significant relationship between principals' communication style and school climate?

**Table 5**  
Relationship between each of the Principals' Communication Styles and School Climate Behaviour

Variable	School Climate Behaviours					
	Supportive	Directive	Engaged	Frustrated	Intimate	
Communication Styles	Expressiveness	.474**	.138	.395**	-.146	.415**
	Preciseness	.586**	.163*	.416**	-.178*	.412**
	Niceness	.523**	.109	.487**	-.148	.501**
	Supportiveness	.464**	.116	.548**	-.123	.463**
	Reflectiveness	.509**	.125	.470**	-.097	.492**
	Threaningness	-.069	.376**	.087	.356**	-.052
	Emotionality	-.094	.363**	.176*	.311**	.083

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed).

Table 6 shows that the correlation between principals' communication style and school climate behaviour.

**Table 6**  
Relationship between Principals' Communication Style and School Climate

Variable	Communication Style	School Climate
<b>Communication Style</b>	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.522**
<b>School Climate</b>	Pearson Correlation	.522**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

According to the data presented in Table 6, there was positively moderate correlation between principals' communication style and school climate ( $r=.522^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### Findings from Open-ended Questions

There are five open-ended questions in this study. The findings from open-ended questions are summarized and briefly described.

According to open-ended responses, most of teachers answered that their principal was very expressive, familiar and treat them as his or her family members. Most of the teachers responded that their principal helped and supported in the respective field of duties to improve the activities of the school. In contrast, nearly 32% (n= 56) of teachers stated that their principal directly instructed the individual teacher for the school activities during the monthly meeting. Most of teachers answered that the teachers cooperated with their students to improve teaching and school activities. Most of teachers responded that there was no frustrated behaviour among teachers in their school. Their relationship is friendly and treat as a family.

The findings indicated that the principals practiced most expressiveness style in School A, B, and C. In School E, preciseness style was practiced most by the principal. But the climate of these four schools had closed climate on the openness index. In these schools, the principal's supportive behaviour was lower than the principal's directive behaviour and the frustrated behaviour of teachers was higher than the engaged teachers' behaviour.

In School D, niceness style was practiced most by the principal. The climate of the School D had open climate on the openness index. Principal's supportive behaviour was higher than the principal's directive behaviour and the frustrated behaviour of teachers was lower than the engaged teachers' behaviour.

The findings indicated that there was no significant difference between the group of male principals and the group of female principals in communication styles. And also there was no significant difference in school climate behaviour grouped by gender, position, and years of teaching service.

Pearson correlation was conducted to determine whether there was significant relationship between each of the principals' communication styles and school climate behaviour. The first five styles of expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness, reflectiveness were positively moderate correlation with the supportive behaviour, engaged behaviour, and intimate behaviour. In contrast, the last two styles of threateningness and emotionality were positively moderate correlation with directive behaviour and frustrated behaviour.

The styles of expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness, reflectiveness seem to be the important communication styles of principals, having positive relations with school climate. These results could be understood that principals used these five styles of communication, which enhanced school climate behaviour such as supportive, engaged, and intimate. In contrast, threateningness and emotionality style were negatively correlated with the school climate behaviour. Thus, these styles of communication would not help people to feel comfortable or to know exactly how the work should be done. It was equally important for principals to understand that the threateningness and emotionality styles would not lead to improve the school climate or performance and therefore they had to avoid using them altogether.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the findings indicated that all principals used various types of communication style, not the only one. The first five styles are positive in nature while the last two are negative. In general, the findings can be assumed that a relationship exists between positive styles of a school principal's communication and school climate behaviour.

According to Ali and Sherin's (2017) research findings, all of the styles except threateningness and emotionality can contribute positively in developing school performance. Norton (1983) stated that communicator style has a powerful impact upon others. Individuals make use of more than one style, and the communication of styles work together to impact others.

Each school is characterized by its own unique climate. This is the case because schools do operate in different ways. If the climate of a school is good, the school will achieve. It could be said that the creation of any school climate starts with the principal and it was reflected in the relationships among teachers, between teachers and students. Good and effective principals' communication styles enhance smooth running of schools which also helps in the realization of the set goals and objectives. Ubben and Hughes (1992) found that certain principals' styles could create a school climate that improves the productivity of both teachers and students.

Furthermore, school principals' communication styles could impact school climate positively and negatively.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we would like to express our respectful thanks to Dr. Aye Aye Myint (Rector, Yangon University of Education), Dr. Pyone Pyone Aung (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education) and Dr. Kay Thew Hlaing (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education). We would like to express our special thanks to Dr. Daw Htay Khin (Professor, Head of Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education) and Dr. Su Su Thwin (Professor, Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education) who encouraged and supported us for the completion of this study. Further, we would acknowledge to the responsible persons from Basic Education High Schools who participated in this study.

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