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Organizational Communication Patterns in the Management of Children's Education Programs at the Senyum Anak Nusantara Community in Bandar Lampung

Dwi Rahmatun Mukharomah[1], M. Nasor[2], Khairullah [3]
[123] *Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung*
email: dwirahmatunmukharomahh@gmail.com

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Abstract

Volunteer communities rely on communication to coordinate members who participate voluntarily and have limited time, yet studies of their organizational communication rarely examine how temporary activity structures reshape communication flows. This study analyzes the organizational communication patterns of Komunitas Senyum Anak Nusantara (SAN) Bandar Lampung in managing children's education programs, focusing on communication direction, communication networks, and their roles in supporting information sharing, coordination, task division, decision-making, and feedback. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews with purposively selected informants, participant observation conducted by the first author as an insider, and organizational documents, then analyzed thematically. The findings reveal a dual structure: a permanent division track and an activity track led by an implementation committee (presplak). Vertical and inter-division communication flows proceed stepwise through division heads, who act as central nodes and thus as potential bottlenecks. Diagonal communication is institutionalized through the presplak and emerges situationally on event days, as well as through a backup channel operated by the member resource development division. Decisions are made through deliberation (shura) involving the board and division heads, while ordinary members' participation remains uneven. Program management therefore depends on balancing central nodes with alternative communication channels.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, Communication Network, Volunteer Community

INTRODUCTION

Volunteer communities working in child education help fill gaps in non-formal education that are not always adequately addressed by schools. Through literacy activities, science experiments, social skills development, and character building, these communities provide more flexible learning opportunities for children in underserved areas. However, the success of such programs depends not only on the

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quality of activity planning but also on the organization's ability to coordinate volunteers who participate on a voluntary basis. These volunteers often have diverse backgrounds, varying schedules, and different levels of involvement, making coordination and communication essential to sustaining program implementation. Studies on volunteerism indicate that volunteer engagement can be influenced by how organizations welcome new members, communicate information, and provide support to their members (Miao et al., 2024; Traeger et al., 2022;d (Walker et al., 2016).

In volunteer organizations, communication carries a greater burden than it does in organizations based on paid employment. Robbins and Judge (2024) identify five functions of organizational communication: management, which directs and controls members' behavior; feedback; emotional expression; persuasion; and information exchange. In organizations without formal employment relationships, the management function cannot rely on economic sanctions. Consequently, coordination, task compliance, and member engagement depend heavily on how information is communicated, received, and followed up. Therefore, organizational communication patterns provide an appropriate starting point for understanding how volunteer communities manage their programs.

Organizational communication patterns can be examined through two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the direction of message flow. Robbins and Judge (2024) classify communication into three directions. Downward communication conveys instructions and task-related information from leaders to members; upward communication conveys reports, challenges, and feedback from members to leaders; and lateral or horizontal communication occurs between individuals at the same organizational level. However, this classification does not fully capture communication flows that cross both functional units and hierarchical levels. This study therefore includes diagonal communication as an additional analytical category to examine such flows. The second dimension is the communication network, which refers to the arrangement of connections among organizational members. Robbins and Judge (2024) distinguish between chain, wheel, and all-channel networks, while studies of organizational communication in Indonesia also employ wheel, star, Y-shaped, and circle patterns to examine coordination within organizations (Prasetijowati et al., 2023), as do Widiarti et al. (2024). Positions within a communication network determine the degree of control over message flows, and these positions are shaped more by task design than by individual personality traits, as shown by Bizzi (2024). A person occupying the central position in a wheel network can accelerate information dissemination while simultaneously becoming a potential bottleneck through which information may be delayed or restricted.

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For the study of Islamic preaching (da'wah) and communication, such collective efforts also involve a value-based dimension. Islam emphasizes consultation (shura) as a fundamental principle in managing collective affairs. Allah, the Most Exalted, states in the Qur'an:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ

"So, by mercy from Allah, you (O Prophet Muhammad) were lenient with them. Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So pardon them, ask Allah's forgiveness for them, and consult them in matters of importance. Then, when you have made a decision, put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who put their trust in Him."(QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 159)

The verse highlights three communicative elements: gentleness, which creates space for others to express their views; consultation (*shura*), as a process of collective decision-making; and the firm implementation of decisions once consultation has concluded. These elements are relevant to understanding child education volunteer communities, whose social activities can be understood as a form of da'wah bil-hal, or Islamic preaching through concrete actions that benefit society (Ali & Hasan, 2019). Masduki (2015) interprets this verse as outlining the stages of consultation within an organization, beginning with gentleness and culminating in trust in Allah after a decision has been made. Meanwhile, Alfiyah (2023) emphasizes that consultation produces inclusive decisions when supported by open, empathetic, and attentive communication. Therefore, examining how volunteer communities disseminate information and make decisions also involves exploring the extent to which the principle of shura is reflected in their organizational communication practices.

Previous studies have demonstrated that organizational communication plays an important role in supporting educational and social programs. Widhihatmini et al. (2023) found that two-way communication and intensive coordination among management, volunteers, and participants supported the implementation of an equivalency education program for street children at Yayasan Saudara Sejiwa. Rambe et al. (2024) showed that internal and external communication barriers affected the effectiveness of early childhood education institutions, highlighting the need for systematic communication strategies. Dirgantara and Rochmaniah (2026) examined vertical communication patterns in small-scale organizations, while a study of Komunitas Jendela Jakarta (Ambarita et al., 2026) demonstrated that digital communication strategies, regular briefings and evaluations, and participatory communication contributed to program coordination and volunteer engagement in that community. Widiarti et al. (2024) identified wheel and star communication patterns in the management of social welfare programs at the Social Welfare

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Development Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board (Majelis Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Sosial PP Muhammadiyah). At the international level, Traeger et al. (2022) extended organizational socialization theory to the context of volunteer work. Miao et al. (2024) demonstrated that organizational socialization tactics influence outcomes among new volunteers, while Daugherty (2019) highlighted meetings as important arenas for communication within volunteer organizations.

Previous studies have generally treated organizational structure as a fixed organizational chart and descriptively mapped communication flows within it. However, many volunteer communities operate with two simultaneous structural layers: a divisional structure that remains in place throughout a leadership term and a committee structure established for each activity. The latter places members within two coordination lines simultaneously, potentially altering both the direction and the network of communication. Furthermore, previous studies have rarely examined communication direction in relation to members' positions within communication networks. As a result, problems such as delayed information delivery tend to be interpreted as issues of member discipline rather than as potential consequences of network structure. This is the research gap addressed by the present study.

The Senyum Anak Nusantara (SAN) Community in Bandar Lampung provides a relevant case for addressing this gap. This child education volunteer community had approximately one hundred members during the 2025/2026 organizational period, distributed across seven divisions. Each activity was led by an implementation committee known as the presidium pelaksana (presplak), which operated outside the divisional structure (Komunitas Senyum Anak Nusantara Bandar Lampung, 2025). Preliminary interviews with community leaders indicated that program implementation did not always proceed as planned. Some members received or responded to information late, participation in coordination forums was uneven, and feedback between leaders and members remained suboptimal.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study addresses two research questions. First, how are organizational communication patterns, encompassing communication directions (downward, upward, horizontal, and diagonal) and communication networks, formed in the management of children's education programs at the Senyum Anak Nusantara (SAN) Community in Bandar Lampung? Second, how do these patterns support information dissemination, coordination, task allocation, decision-making, and feedback, and what barriers arise in the process? The novelty of this study lies in its examination of organizational communication within a volunteer community characterized by a dual structure: divisional channels and activity-based channels led by the presplak (implementation committee). It links communication direction to the positions of nodes within communication networks and to the

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principle of shura (consultation). Theoretically, this study extends the discussion of organizational communication in volunteer communities. Practically, its findings may provide insights for the community into strengthening coordination and member participation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case study design (Harrison et al., 2017). The case under investigation was the Senyum Anak Nusantara (SAN) Community in Bandar Lampung during the 2025/2026 organizational term, with the unit of analysis consisting of communication flows and networks involved in the management of children's education programs. The 2025 Sekolah Nusantara program was selected as an embedded case because it encompassed a complete activity cycle, from the establishment of the presplak (implementation committee) in May 2025 to four sessions held between September and October 2025, and was documented in the activity timeline.

The first author served as the coordinator of SAN Bandar Lampung during the 2025/2026 organizational term; therefore, the research was conducted from an insider research position. This position provided extensive access to meetings, communication groups, and organizational documents, but also introduced a risk of bias because the researcher was part of the organizational structure under investigation, as discussed by Bukamal (2022). To mitigate this risk, the first author's knowledge as coordinator was treated as observational data requiring corroboration; quotations presented in the article were drawn exclusively from other informants; findings were re-examined through triangulation and member checking; and the second and third authors, who were external to the organization, served as peer debriefers throughout the analysis.

This study involved nine informants who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in the communication flows under investigation. The selection ensured that each position within the dual organizational structure was represented, including core members of the Badan Pengurus Harian (BPH; executive board), namely the deputy coordinator and treasurer; division heads and deputy division heads; the presplak (implementation committee) and the person in charge of the Sekolah Nusantara event; a member of the Member Resource Development Division (Pengembangan Sumber Daya Anggota, PSDA); and two ordinary members. The list of informants is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Research Informants

No	Name	Position	Division	Interview Date
1	Syaikha Nabilla Azzahra	Deputy Coordinator	Core Executive Board (BPH)	3 May 2026
2	Roliana Suprihatin	Treasurer	Core Executive Board (BPH)	4 May 2026
3	Bagus Anugerah Putra	Division Head	Public Relations	3 May 2026
4	Vania Dinda Yuliana	Deputy Division Head	Public Relations	4 May 2026
5	Aryo Prambudi	Chair of the Sekolah Nusantara Implementation Committee (presplak)	Public Relations (Member)	3 May 2026
6	Ersa Puspita Sari	Sekolah Nusantara Event PIC	Events (Member)	4 May 2026
7	Lisa Kurniati	Member	Member Resource Development (PSDA)	4 May 2026
8	Lulu Dewi Septika	Member	Media and Information (Medinfo)	4 May 2026
9	Hilsa Yatun Alifiyah	Member	Media and Information (Medinfo)	4 May 2026

Data were collected using three techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted on May 3–4, 2026, using an interview guide developed around communication directions, communication networks, and five program management processes. Second, participant observation was carried out by the first author throughout the 2025/2026 organizational term, particularly during the online planning, progress, and finalization meetings for Sekolah Nusantara; the in-person evaluation meeting; and the implementation of the program. Third, documentation included the volunteer organizational structure, divisional standard operating procedures (SOPs), the timeline for Sekolah Nusantara 2025, meeting minutes, and the structure of the organization's WhatsApp groups, with members' identities anonymized.

Data analysis followed the interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2018). Coding was conducted deductively, using initial categories consisting of the three communication directions (Robbins & Judge, 2024), supplemented by diagonal communication, communication network patterns, and the five program management processes. Inductive coding was then applied to incorporate themes emerging from the data, such as the dual organizational structure and alternative communication channels.

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Communication networks were mapped qualitatively based on communication pathways reported by informants and observed by the researcher, rather than through calculations of social network analysis metrics. Data trustworthiness was assessed through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with the executive board (BPH), division heads, and presplak representatives to verify the resulting communication pathway maps. All informants provided written consent to participate in the study, including consent for their names and positions to be included in the article. Interview quotations were presented in accordance with the informants' statements, with only limited editing for spelling and no changes to their meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Communication Patterns in Child Education Program Management: Dual Structures, Divisional and Activity-Based Channels

This section presents the findings under five themes: the organization's dual structure, communication direction, communication networks, the role of communication patterns in supporting program management processes, and the challenges encountered along with the mechanisms used to balance them. The discussion then interprets these findings in relation to organizational communication theory, the principle of *shura* (mutual consultation), and previous studies.

SAN Bandar Lampung has a permanent four-level organizational structure consisting of the coordinator; the core Executive Board (BPH), comprising a deputy coordinator, two secretaries, and two treasurers; division heads and deputy division heads (kadiv/wakadiv) across seven divisions; and division members. The seven divisions are Events, Media and Information (Medinfo), Public Relations, Fundraising, Materials, Logistics, and Member Resource Development (PSDA).

In addition to this permanent structure, each activity is led by an implementation committee (presplak), consisting of an implementation chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, together with an event person in charge (PIC). Consequently, each member operates through two communication channels simultaneously: the divisional channel, through which members carry out their respective divisional responsibilities, and the activity-based channel, through which they work under the coordination of the presplak. The differences between these two channels are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2. Comparison of Divisional and Activity-Based Communication Channels

Aspect	Divisional Channel (Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads)	Activity-Based Channel (Implementation Committee and PIC)
Origin	Permanent position throughout the organizational term	Open to members from any division who volunteer and are considered competent; the PIC is appointed by the Head of the Events Division
Focus	Responsibilities and tasks of each division	All stages of a specific activity, from pre-event preparation to post-event follow-up
Communication Tasks	Coordinating members in carrying out their assigned duties, conveying organizational directives, and coordinating with related divisions	Leading meetings; developing concepts, themes, schedules, task assignments, and materials; managing the budget plan (RAB), meeting minutes, and activity reports
Connected To	Division members, other division heads, and the Executive Board (BPH)	Directly with the Executive Board (BPH) and division heads/deputy division heads; with cross-divisional members during activity meetings

The implementation committee (presplak) is established through deliberation. At the beginning of the organizational term, interested members volunteer, after which the core Executive Board (BPH), together with the division heads and deputy division heads, determines suitable candidates based on their competencies and experience. The event person in charge (PIC) is appointed by the Head of the Events Division from among its members. The presplak is responsible for developing activity concepts, leading meetings, determining themes, schedules, task assignments, and materials, managing the activity budget plan (RAB) and meeting minutes through the implementation treasurer and secretary, and preparing activity reports. According to the organization's management, this structure was established because each division has a distinct area of focus. Therefore, coordination needs to be centralized under a single command for each activity while also providing members with opportunities to develop leadership skills. This was explained by the Deputy Coordinator of Senyum Anak Nusantara:

"The presplak is established through deliberation. Members who are interested can volunteer, and then the core BPH, together with the division heads and deputy division heads, considers their abilities and experience. The presplak is important for ensuring that activity coordination is more structured because each division has its own focus. In addition, members can learn to lead and take responsibility through the activities they manage." (S. N. Azzahra, personal communication, May 3, 2026).

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The divisional structure is also not static. The Media and Information Division (Medinfo) initially consisted of three subdivisions: content, design, and decoration. However, because Medinfo's workload became excessive, the decoration subdivision was transferred to the Events Division. This transfer increased the responsibilities of the Events Division, which now develops activity concepts in collaboration with the presplak, appoints the event person in charge (PIC), prepares the rundown, schedules event personnel (MCs, moderators, prayer reciters, speakers, and ice-breaking facilitators), and develops decoration concepts. This adjustment emerged from an evaluation meeting, demonstrating how upward feedback can lead to changes in the organization's work structure.

Communication Direction: Hierarchical, Stepwise Horizontal, and Institutionalized Diagonal Communication

The identified communication pathways are presented in Figure 1 and described in Table 3. Solid lines indicate formal communication channels, while dashed lines represent situational or alternative channels.

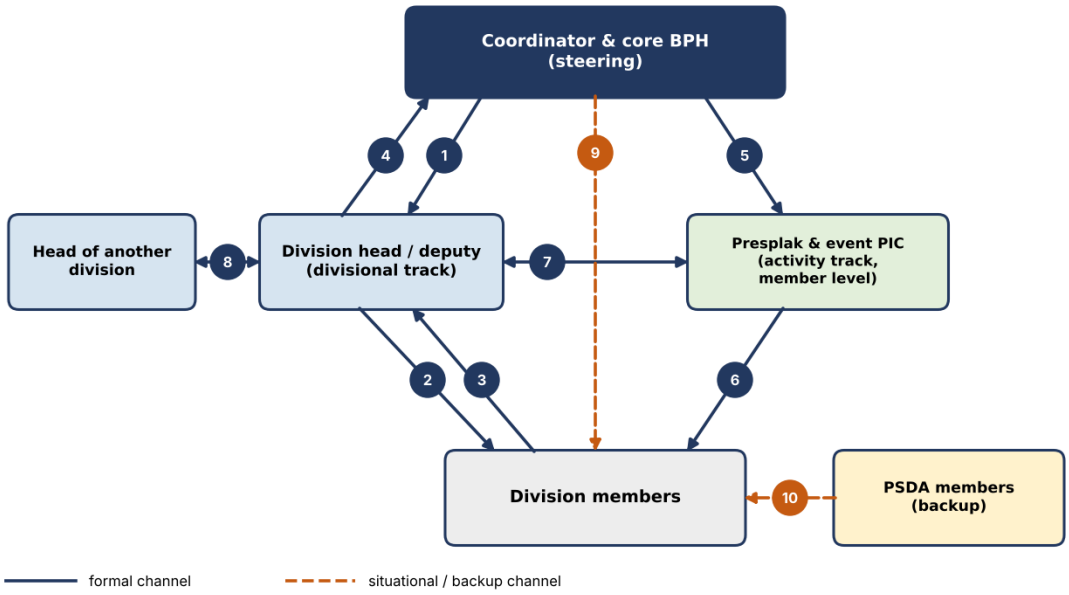


Figure 1. Organizational Communication Pathways of SAN Bandar Lampung

Table 3. Communication Channels and Directions

No	Channel	Content and media	Direction
1	Coordinator/BPH → Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads	Directives via the BPH–division heads group; quarterly BPH–division heads meetings	Downward
2	Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads → Members	Directives forwarded to divisional groups; replies required within 24 hours, followed by private messages	Downward

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3	Members → Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads	Progress reports and challenges are communicated through divisional group chats.	Upward
4	Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads and presplak → BPH	Reports are delivered during progress meetings and evaluation meetings.	Upward
5	BPH and Division Heads → presplak/PIC	Formation through deliberation; approval when priorities conflict	Downward and Coordinative
6	Presplak/PIC → Members	Direct instructions are given during activity meetings held via Google Meet.	Diagonal
7	Presplak/PIC ↔ Division Heads/Deputy Division Heads	Activity group chats are used for communication, with division heads relaying information to their members.	Diagonal
8	Division Heads ↔ Heads of Other Divisions	Members → their division head → the head of the target division → members of the target division.	Stepwise Horizontal
9	Core BPH ↔ Members	Direct communication takes place on the day of implementation, while the division head is kept informed.	Situational Diagonal
10	PSDA Members → Members of Other Divisions	PSDA members take over the communication process when the relevant division head cannot be reached.	Alternative Diagonal

Downward communication follows a hierarchical structure. Directives from the coordinator and the Executive Board (BPH) are conveyed through the BPH and division heads/deputy division heads WhatsApp group and meetings between the BPH and division heads, which are held every three months. The directives are then relayed by division heads/deputy division heads to their respective divisional groups. Division heads and deputy division heads serve as the primary channels for communicating information to members. Every message in the group must receive a response within 24 hours. If a member has not responded within that period, the division head or deputy division head contacts the member privately to ensure that the information has been received. During activity preparation, volunteers generally do not contact the coordinator directly but communicate through their division heads or the presplak. A Deputy Head of the Public Relations Division explained:

"Usually, we forward directives from the BPH to our divisional group. If a member has not responded within 24 hours, we send them a private message to make sure they have received the information. As division heads or deputy division heads, we serve as the link between the BPH and the members." (V. D. Yuliana, personal communication, May 4, 2026).

Upward communication must also pass through division heads or deputy division heads. Members report their progress and difficulties in completing assigned

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tasks through divisional group chats. The division heads or deputy division heads then present these reports during progress meetings to the organization's management and other division members in attendance. The BPH reviews all reports and determines the necessary follow-up actions. Although members are encouraged to express their opinions during meetings, the management observes that they tend to feel hesitant to speak up, even when the management maintains an open attitude. Lulu Dewi Septika, a member of the Media and Information Division (Medinfo), stated:

"We are actually allowed to express our opinions. However, sometimes we still feel hesitant or afraid of saying the wrong thing, especially when attending meetings with the management. So, we usually prefer to communicate our progress or difficulties through our division head first." (L. D. Septika, personal communication, May 4, 2026).

Horizontal communication among members within the same division takes place through divisional group chats. In contrast, interdivisional communication does not occur directly between members but follows a four-step process: a member communicates a need to their division head; the division head forwards the request to the head of the relevant division through the BPH and division heads/deputy division heads WhatsApp group; and the receiving division head relays the information to their divisional group. Interdivisional workflows include coordination between the Events Division and Medinfo regarding themes and posters, followed by coordination from the Events Division regarding decorations that align with the posters; coordination between Medinfo and Public Relations regarding captions; coordination between Public Relations and Fundraising regarding sponsorships and media partnerships; coordination between the Materials Division and the Events and Logistics Divisions; and coordination between Logistics and all other divisions. Logistics, Medinfo, and Events are the divisions contacted most frequently.

Diagonal communication occurs in three forms. The first and most prominent form is institutionalized through the presplak. Although the presplak is selected from the membership level, it leads activity meetings, directs members across divisions, and coordinates directly with the BPH and division heads through activity-specific group chats. The presplak is regarded as the activity's "chief navigator," whose directives must be followed, while division heads continue coordinating with the presplak on matters related to their respective divisions. When the presplak's instructions conflict with a division head's priorities, the presplak has the final say, subject to the approval of the coordinator or BPH. In addition to this formal channel, some members also coordinate directly with the presplak without going through their

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division heads. This was explained by the chair of the implementation committee for the Sekolah Nusantara program:

"As a presplak, we must be able to direct members from different divisions. We usually lead activity meetings and coordinate directly with division heads or the BPH through activity-specific group chats. Therefore, throughout the activity, the presplak is in command to ensure that everything remains well coordinated." (A. Prambudi, personal communication, May 3, 2026).

The second form is situational and occurs on the day of implementation. The core BPH communicates directly with members without involving division heads to address unexpected issues that arise during program activities. These may include a child suddenly becoming restless, missing equipment that must be located immediately, or requests for documentation. The third form is an alternative communication channel: PSDA members monitor divisional group chats and take over the communication process when division heads or deputy division heads cannot be reached, as discussed in the following section on communication networks.

Layered Communication Networks

SAN's communication networks do not follow a single pattern but instead consist of multiple layers depending on the context (Figure 2). Within a division, the network follows a wheel pattern, with the division head at the center, as members report their progress and difficulties to the division head, who then relays directives to them. Across divisions, the network follows a chain pattern consisting of four nodes: the originating member, the originating division head, the receiving division head, and the members of the receiving division. Within an activity, the network returns to a wheel pattern, with the presplak and PIC serving as the central communication points. In the general group, the BPH–division heads group, and on implementation days, the network may shift toward an all-channel pattern, in which participants can send and respond to messages as needed.

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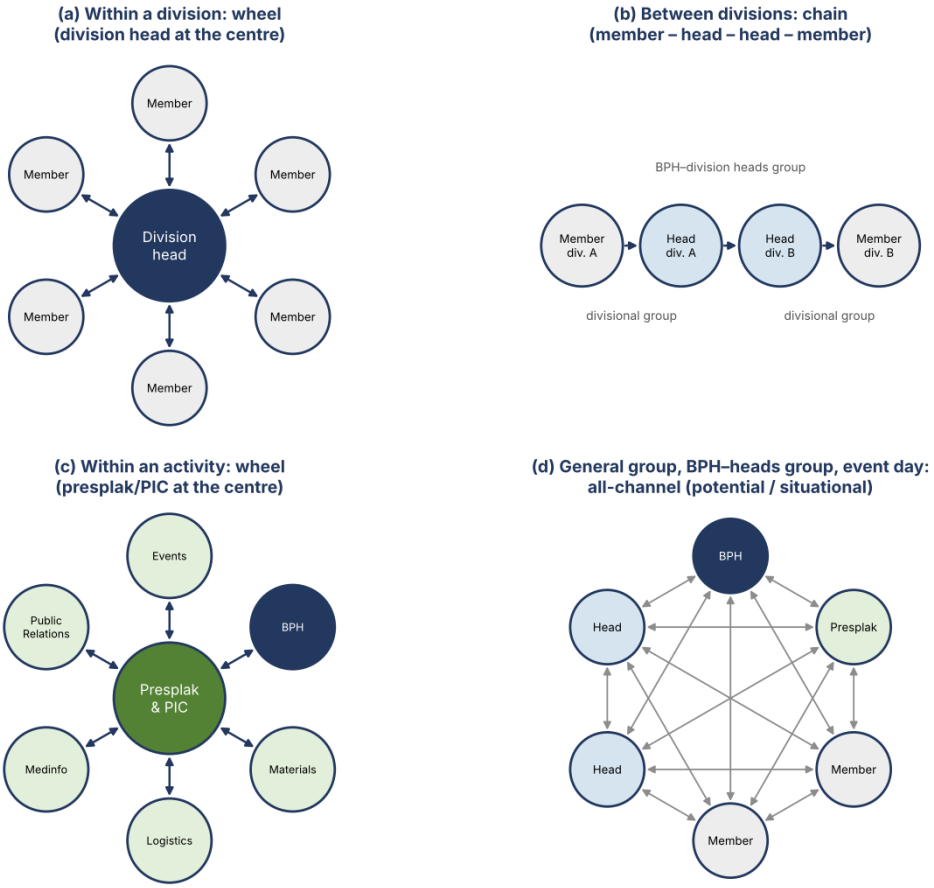


Figure 2. Communication Network Patterns of SAN across Four Contexts

The communication media used reflect these layered networks. SAN uses five types of WhatsApp groups: a general group comprising the BPH, division heads/deputy division heads, and all members; a group for the BPH and division heads/deputy division heads; a group for the BPH and PSDA; separate groups for each division; and activity-specific groups comprising the BPH, division heads/deputy division heads, presplak, and PIC. The organization's management considers these groups effective in clarifying coordination pathways because each message has a designated communication channel. Planning, progress, and finalization meetings are held online via Google Meet, with schedules distributed through WhatsApp broadcasts, while BPH meetings, meetings between the BPH and division heads, evaluation meetings, and activity implementation take place face-to-face. For the Sekolah Nusantara program, meeting minutes, event schedules (rundown), and lists of sponsors and media partners are also managed through shared documents.

Because almost all communication within and between divisions passes through division heads or deputy division heads, these positions serve as the network's primary nodes. When division heads and deputy division heads are busy or

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unreachable, messages may be delayed before reaching members. This dependency explains the existence of the PSDA alternative communication channel. One PSDA informant described how coordination is maintained when division heads or deputy division heads are difficult to contact:

"Sometimes, information does not reach members because the division head or deputy division head is busy. In such situations, PSDA usually helps follow up or communicate the information directly to members so that coordination can continue and no information is missed." (L. Kurniati, personal communication, May 4, 2026).

The Role of Communication Patterns in Supporting Program Management

Information dissemination is supported by WhatsApp groups organized according to the organizational structure, meeting-schedule broadcasts, and the 24-hour response rule. Organizational directives reach members through divisional channels, whereas activity-related instructions are communicated directly during activity meetings and relayed through division heads outside those meetings.

Coordination is carried out through a series of meetings for each activity. Planning meetings discuss the activity concept, proposed location, rundown, poster design, donations, sponsorships, and permits. Progress meetings review the completion of each division member's assigned tasks. The implementation committee chair opens the meeting, the implementation secretary records the minutes, and the implementation treasurer discusses the budget plan (RAB) and donations. Each division then reports its progress and challenges through its division head or deputy division head. The finalization meeting, held three days before the event (H-3), reviews the final progress and identifies minor outstanding tasks that must be completed.

For the 2025 Sekolah Nusantara program, this process included an initial internal meeting on June 3 to establish the timeline and task assignments; a site survey conducted from June 16 to 21; a meeting with village officials on August 8; and the first, second, and third progress meetings on August 5, August 21, and September 1, respectively. The third progress meeting set a target of at least 40% completion for each division. The preparation of educational materials took place from September 1 to 5, followed by the finalization of logistics and materials on September 9, a final meeting involving the entire committee on September 26, and preliminary and final rehearsals on September 27–28. The timeline also incorporated each division's university class schedule and a risk assessment table, indicating that volunteers' availability was taken into account from the planning stage.

Task assignments are established at the beginning of each organizational term through a general meeting (upgrading), during which members are introduced to

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their respective job descriptions, each division's standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the work programs for the entire term. These assignments are then specified for each activity by the presplak during planning meetings. Decision-making combines deliberation and appointment: the presplak is selected through deliberation involving the core BPH and division heads/deputy division heads; the PIC is appointed by the Head of the Events Division; the final venue is decided by the implementation committee chair in collaboration with Public Relations based on the site survey results; and conflicts between the presplak's directives and division heads' priorities are resolved by the presplak, subject to BPH approval. Feedback is provided through face-to-face evaluation meetings after activities and through membership evaluations. When division heads reported that their members were inactive, the BPH promptly organized an evaluation meeting that allowed all division heads and deputy division heads to communicate their challenges and concerns. This meeting resulted in a policy of member screening and additional recruitment through a second open recruitment period.

Attendance is recorded using yellow marks for excused absences and red marks for unexcused absences. Members with frequent yellow marks receive a first warning letter (SP 1); those who frequently request permission to be absent and have also missed activities without explanation receive a second warning letter (SP 2); and members with frequent red marks receive a third warning letter (SP 3) and are dismissed from the organization. Responsiveness to messages in group chats is also considered during the membership screening process.

Challenges and Balancing Mechanisms

The identified challenges and the mechanisms developed by the organization to address them are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Communication Barriers and Balancing Mechanisms

Communication Barriers	Manifestations	Balancing Mechanisms
Dependence on division heads/deputy division heads as central communication nodes	Messages are delayed when division heads or deputy division heads are busy or unreachable.	PSDA as an alternative communication channel; dedicated BPH–PSDA group
Uneven responsiveness and participation	Members fail to respond to group messages; attendance at online meetings is low.	24-hour response rule, private messages from division heads, membership screening and warning letters (SPs), and additional recruitment
Reluctance to express opinions	Members are reluctant to speak up during meetings, despite the management's openness.	Open meetings; division heads serve as intermediaries (with limited effectiveness)

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Hierarchical interdivisional coordination	Four-step communication process from a member to members of another division.	BPH–division heads group; interdivisional assistance in urgent situations
Operational challenges on the day of implementation	Children become restless; equipment is missing and must be located immediately.	Direct communication between the BPH and members; assistance from other divisions

Table 4 shows that each barrier rooted in the communication network structure has a corresponding balancing mechanism, except for members' reluctance to express their opinions. This barrier is particularly difficult to address because the available channels for members to voice their concerns remain dependent on division heads acting as intermediaries.

The Presplak as an Institutionalized Form of Diagonal Communication

In the organizational behavior literature (Robbins & Judge, 2024), lateral communication is viewed as a complement to formal vertical channels: it accelerates coordination but may create conflict when members bypass their superiors. The findings at SAN reveal a different arrangement, in which diagonal communication is institutionalized through the presplak. A member appointed as presplak is authorized to direct members from other divisions and coordinate directly with the BPH. Consequently, cross-divisional coordination does not always have to pass through the chain of division heads. This structure resembles temporary project-based organizing (Bakker et al., 2016) and dual team membership, in which individuals work in more than one team simultaneously (Margolis, 2020).

The consequence of a dual-structure system is the potential for overlapping lines of command. SAN addresses this issue through clear rules: the presplak serves as the "chief navigator" of an activity, while conflicts over priorities are resolved by the presplak with the approval of the BPH. This finding extends the study by Dirgantara and Rochmaniah (2026) on vertical communication in small organizations. In volunteer communities with a dual organizational structure, communication flows cannot be adequately mapped onto a single organizational chart, as an individual's position within the communication flow depends on which pathway is currently active. Furthermore, the role of the presplak as a space for leadership development demonstrates that diagonal communication in this context serves not only to improve efficiency but also to facilitate leadership regeneration.

Division Heads as Communication Hubs: Efficiency and Vulnerability

Robbins & Judge (2024) explain that the wheel network relies on a central figure who serves as the communication link for the entire group, enabling messages to flow quickly and making leadership within the group clearly defined. However, this pattern also means that the smooth flow of communication depends heavily on the

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central figure. This pattern is evident in SAN's division heads and deputy division heads (kadiv/wakadiv), who serve as the central hubs within their respective divisions while also functioning as links in the communication chain between divisions. This has important implications for understanding the issues raised by organizational leaders during preliminary interviews. Delays in information reaching members cannot be attributed solely to a lack of discipline among individual members. When nearly all communication flows through a single hub, delays at that point may be perceived by organizational leaders as slow responses from the members themselves. In other words, some communication delays are consequences of the network structure rather than merely reflections of individual attitudes.

SAN has developed two mechanisms to address this vulnerability. First, the PSDA serves as a backup communication channel when the primary hub is inaccessible. Second, the 24-hour response rule, membership screening process, and SP system perform managerial functions in communication by directing and controlling members' behavior (Robbins and Judge, 2024). However, the second mechanism places the burden on members rather than on the communication hub itself. In a volunteer organization without formal employment ties, excessive reliance on sanctions for behavioral control risks discouraging members from expressing their opinions. Research on volunteer retention indicates that organizational support and the fulfillment of volunteers' expectations influence their decisions to remain involved, as shown by Walker et al. (2016). This finding is consistent with Widhihatmini et al. (2023), who emphasize that two-way communication supports educational programs. The present finding further suggests that the effectiveness of such two-way communication depends on who occupies the central position within the network.

Shura and the Limits of Member Participation

SAN's decision-making practices reflect the principle of shura (consultation) as outlined in QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 159. The presplak is selected through deliberation involving the BPH and division heads, evaluation meetings provide opportunities for division heads and deputy division heads to communicate challenges, and decisions are implemented promptly once they have been made, as illustrated by the reassignment of the decoration subdivision and the membership screening policy. This pattern of deliberation followed by firm implementation is consistent with the sequence presented in the verse: consultation followed by a firm resolution. The rule that the presplak resolves priority conflicts with BPH approval can also be understood as an expression of 'azm (determination) following collective deliberation.

However, shura at SAN is primarily practiced at the leadership level. The voices of ordinary members reach decision-making forums through division heads, while

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members themselves tend to feel reluctant to express their opinions during meetings. The same verse precedes the instruction to consult with an emphasis on gentleness, suggesting that deliberation requires an environment in which others feel safe to speak. Research on employee voice and silence indicates that the decision to speak up is influenced by perceived risks and benefits (Zhan, 2020). Therefore, openness among the leadership is insufficient if the communication channels available to members remain hierarchical. This finding differs from the context of early childhood education institutions examined by (Rambe et al. 2024), where organizational structures are formal and working relationships are relatively stable. In volunteer communities, extending shura to ordinary members is essential for sustaining their long-term participation, as their continued involvement depends on their own willingness rather than on any formal obligation.

Digital Media That Follow Organizational Structure

The use of WhatsApp does not eliminate organizational hierarchy. Instead, SAN's WhatsApp groups are organized according to its existing structure, meaning that digital media reproduce hierarchical communication networks rather than replace them. The all-channel pattern emerges only in the general group and on activity days, while day-to-day coordination continues to follow the divisional communication chain. Online meetings are used for planning and progress updates that primarily involve reporting, whereas evaluations and the handling of field-related challenges take place face-to-face, where direct clarification and immediate feedback are more necessary.

This finding is consistent with studies showing that different media offer distinct affordances for organizational communication (Guo et al., 2021) and that WhatsApp groups have become channels for coordination and decision-making within organizations (Doğan, 2019); (Omar et al., 2020). These findings highlight that communication effectiveness is determined not merely by the availability of communication media, but also by the social structures embedded within them.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the first author's position as a coordinator provided broad access to the organization but may have influenced how organizational leaders perceived issues involving ordinary members. Therefore, findings regarding members' responsiveness and reluctance to express their opinions should be interpreted as findings that have been subject to limited corroboration. Second, the communication network was mapped qualitatively rather than through conversation data analyzed using social network metrics. Third, the study focused on a single community and one embedded activity; thus, its findings are analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable.

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CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the organizational communication patterns of SAN Bandar Lampung are shaped by a dual structure, consisting of permanent divisional communication channels and activity-based channels led by the presplak. Downward, upward, and interdivisional communication take place hierarchically through division heads and deputy division heads (kadiv/wakadiv), while diagonal communication is institutionalized through the presplak and emerges situationally during activity days, as well as through the PSDA backup channel. The communication network operates at multiple levels: a wheel network within divisions and activities, a chain network between divisions, and an all-channel network within the general group and during activity days. This pattern supports information dissemination, coordination, task allocation, consultative decision-making, and prompt follow-up on feedback at the leadership level. However, communication challenges arise from dependence on division heads as central hubs, inconsistent member responsiveness, members' reluctance to express their opinions, and operational constraints on activity days.

Theoretically, this study extends the three directions of organizational communication (Robbins & Judge, 2024) by demonstrating that diagonal communication in volunteer communities can function as an institutionalized formal channel rather than merely as a supplement to vertical communication. It also shows that issues concerning member responsiveness should be understood in relation to the structural position of communication hubs within the network. From the perspective of Islamic preaching (da'wah), the practice of shura within this community functions effectively at the leadership level but has yet to fully include ordinary members. In practical terms, SAN could establish limited direct communication channels between members of different divisions for technical matters, designate permanent substitutes when division heads are unavailable, provide anonymous feedback forums for members, and prepare equipment checklists before activity days. Future research could analyze group conversation logs, with members' consent, to quantitatively measure network centrality, compare several volunteer communities with different organizational structures, and position ordinary members as primary informants.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

DRM designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the initial manuscript draft. MN and KH provided input on the theoretical framework and methodology, served as peer reviewers during the data analysis process, and revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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