

Organizational Communication Dynamics within the Indonesian Pediatric Society: An Analysis of Internal and External Relations in Strengthening Professionalism and Health Advocacy

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Abstract

This study analyzes the internal and external communication dynamics within the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI), a professional medical organization that plays a strategic role in enhancing pediatricians' professionalism and advocating for child health in Indonesia. Adopting a qualitative approach through a case study method, the research collected data via in-depth interviews with IDAI executives, pediatric specialists, and a review of relevant documents. Findings indicate that internal communication within IDAI serves a crucial function in program coordination, member engagement, and the dissemination of policy information and medical education. Meanwhile, external communication with government bodies, the media, and the public contributes to strengthening child health advocacy and countering misinformation. Despite IDAI's efforts to optimize digital technology in both internal and external communication, challenges remain—particularly in building organizational cohesion and ensuring effective public outreach. This study underscores the importance of adaptive and participatory communication strategies to enhance the effectiveness of professional medical organizations. The findings offer valuable insights into the development of more responsive and strategic organizational communication within the health sector.

I. Introduction

Professional organizations play a strategic role in shaping academic standards, ethical norms, and advocacy efforts within their respective fields. In the healthcare sector, organizations such as the Indonesian Pediatric Society (*Ikatan Dokter Anak Indonesia*, IDAI) serve as a frontline institution in advancing the quality of pediatric care in Indonesia. As an umbrella organization for pediatricians, IDAI operates with a complex communication structure, encompassing both internal and external dimensions. Internal relations involve communication among members, executive boards, and various departments within the organization, while external relations entail interactions with government institutions, the public, media, and other health-related organizations. These two communication domains are interconnected and significantly influence the organization's ability to achieve its mission (Littlejohn et al., 2017)

Organizational communication is a critical element in ensuring an organization's sustainability and effectiveness. As noted by Miller (2020), organizational communication functions not only as a channel for information dissemination but also as a mechanism for building organizational culture, strengthening collective identity, and facilitating decision-making processes. In medical professional bodies such as IDAI, effective communication ensures that members remain informed about the latest developments in pediatric medicine, health regulations, and policies affecting their clinical practices (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

At the internal level, strong communication contributes to member engagement, capacity building, and enhanced coordination in the implementation of organizational programs. Conversely, external communication enables professional bodies to build strategic relationships with stakeholders and advocate for both the profession and broader child health issues at national and international levels. Thus, understanding the dynamics of internal and external communication within IDAI is crucial to assessing the organization's effectiveness in achieving its vision and mission (Keyton, 2011).

Internal communication within IDAI involves interactions among the central board, regional branches, and members across the country. Given that IDAI's structure is membership-based, effective communication mechanisms are essential to facilitate coordination and foster synergy among members. According to a study by Merriam & Tisdell (2016), organizations with robust internal communication are more likely to boost member engagement and nurture a solid organizational culture.

In the case of IDAI, internal communication takes various forms, including regular

meetings, seminars, organizational bulletins, and digital platforms that support information exchange and professional discussions. IDAI has also integrated information technology to enhance internal communication effectiveness through the use of social media, online discussion groups, and webinars accessible to members nationwide (Liliweri, 2008). This aligns with the findings of Welch & Jackson (2007), who emphasize that modern organizations increasingly depend on communication technologies to enhance collaboration and member participation.

Nevertheless, challenges persist in IDAI's internal communication—particularly regarding coordination between central and regional entities, and the uneven levels of member engagement across organizational activities. Thus, adaptive and inclusive communication strategies are essential to ensure that all members can actively contribute to the organization (Cornelissen, 2014).

Beyond internal communication, IDAI holds a vital role in external communication, particularly in the area of child health advocacy. As an authoritative body in pediatric health, IDAI frequently engages with government institutions, international health organizations, mass media, and the general public. The primary objectives of this external communication are to educate the public, provide policy recommendations to the government, and raise awareness about critical child health issues (Dainton & Zelle, 2022).

In communication with the government, IDAI acts as a strategic partner in formulating child health policies. The organization routinely offers evidence-based recommendations on immunization, child nutrition, and the management of specific diseases (Mulyana, 2001). Research by Holtzhausen & Zerfass (2014) highlights that organizational communication with the government must be grounded in strong data to ensure that the recommendations are accepted and effectively implemented.

Moreover, IDAI actively engages with the public through health campaigns and educational outreach. In today's digital age, social media serves as a powerful communication tool for professional organizations to disseminate credible information and reach broader audiences. This is in line with the study by Lovejoy & Saxton (2012), which found that nonprofit organizations are increasingly relying on social media to engage with the public and strengthen institutional trust.

The primary challenge in IDAI's external communication lies in ensuring that messages are comprehensible to the general public and do not lead to misunderstandings. This necessitates effective communication strategies, including simplifying messages without compromising accuracy, and collaborating with media outlets to disseminate child health issues more widely.

(Coombs, 2012).

Internal and external communications within IDAI are inherently interconnected, as both are instrumental in fulfilling the organization's objectives. According to Argenti (2007), organizations with effective internal communication structures are generally better equipped to execute coherent and impactful external communication. In the case of IDAI, strong internal coordination among the executive board and members enables the organization to deliver consistent messages to external stakeholders. For example, when IDAI seeks to advocate for a particular child health policy, internal communication ensures alignment among members before presenting unified recommendations to the government or the public. Additionally, robust internal communication serves as a defense mechanism against misinformation that could hinder advocacy efforts (Hallahan et al., 2007).

The communication dynamics within IDAI illustrate the importance of balancing internal and external relations in a professional medical organization. While internal communication builds solidarity and fosters member engagement, strategic external communication helps IDAI advocate for child health policies at a national level. Therefore, future research on the effectiveness of communication in professional medical organizations should focus on areas such as communication digitalization, the role of media in advocacy, and the influence of organizational communication on national health policy (Ruben & Stewart, 2006). Understanding the internal and external communication dynamics of IDAI will strengthen the organization's capacity to promote pediatric professionalism and advocate more effectively for child health in Indonesia.

2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to analyze the internal and external communication dynamics within the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with IDAI board members and pediatric specialists affiliated with the organization. In addition, document analysis was conducted on official IDAI publications, internal organizational policies, and external communication reports related to child health advocacy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

The data analysis technique used in this study was thematic analysis, which enabled the researcher to identify key patterns within IDAI's organizational communication practices. The analysis process involved reading interview transcripts, categorizing findings based on core themes, and comparing interview results with the collected documentary data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as through

member checking with key informants to confirm the accuracy of the findings (Patton, 2015). Through this approach, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of communication in enhancing IDAI's organizational effectiveness, particularly in strengthening medical professionalism and child health advocacy in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that internal communication within the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI) plays a critical role in coordinating various organizational programs and ensuring active member participation. Interviews with several IDAI board members indicated that effective communication among organizational members is often a determining factor in the success of educational and advocacy initiatives. One board member remarked, *"Without structured communication, it is difficult for us to disseminate up-to-date information on child health policies to all members across the regions."* This aligns with the observations of Keyton (2011), who asserts that effective internal communication enhances member engagement and improves decision-making efficiency within organizations.

The study also found that IDAI has significantly adapted its internal communication practices to current digital technologies. The use of platforms such as webinars, online discussion groups, and digital bulletins has notably increased information accessibility for members. As one senior IDAI member noted, *"We find it much easier to obtain the latest information through IDAI's digital platforms compared to previous conventional methods."* This finding supports Welch & Jackson (2007) research, which highlights that digitalizing internal communication can improve member engagement and accelerate the dissemination of important organizational information.

Despite the adoption of various communication technologies, certain challenges persist. A key issue is the limited face-to-face interaction inherent in digital communication, which can affect the sense of community among members. This concern was echoed by a pediatrician and IDAI member who stated, *"Although digital communication improves efficiency, we still believe that in-person interactions during seminars or annual meetings offer stronger value in fostering solidarity."* This issue is supported by Sutcliffe et al. (2004) findings, which suggest that face-to-face interactions enhance group cohesion and a sense of belonging in organizational communication.

In addition to internal communication, the study also emphasizes the significance of IDAI's external communication, particularly in its role as a child health advocate. Communication with the government is a crucial component in promoting policies that prioritize child health. One board member noted, *"We strive to ensure that the evidence-based recommendations we provide to the government are incorporated into national policies."* In this context, Lennard (2018) emphasize that evidence-based

organizational communication enhances the likelihood that policy recommendations will be accepted and implemented effectively.

IDAI also actively engages with media outlets to disseminate child health information to the broader public. Mass media, especially television and online news portals, are frequently used to distribute public health education. A representative from IDAI's communications division explained, *"We often collaborate with the media to distribute information on immunization, child nutrition, and various other health campaigns."* This statement is consistent with the findings of, Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) who noted that professional organizations can expand their audience reach through partnerships with mass media.

A major challenge in IDAI's external communication lies in ensuring that messages are understandable to the general public. Several cases indicate that overly technical medical communication can confuse non-medical audiences. One respondent explained, *"We must simplify messages without sacrificing accuracy so that the public can understand the importance of child health issues."* This echoes Coombs (2012) recommendation that communication strategies must consider audience comprehension to prevent message misinterpretation.

The study also found that IDAI faces challenges in combating misinformation regarding child health circulating on social media. Misinformation about vaccinations, for instance, remains a recurrent issue. One IDAI board member emphasized, *"We must actively clarify false information because misinformation can hinder public health efforts."* According to Hallahan et al. (2007), organizations with proactive communication strategies are more effective in mitigating the negative effects of misinformation on social media.

Considering the above findings, it can be concluded that internal and external communications within IDAI play mutually supportive roles in achieving the organization's objectives. Effective internal communication enables the development of well-structured policies and programs, while strategic external communication ensures that IDAI's messages and child health advocacy efforts are received by both the government and the public. Although IDAI has successfully optimized communication technologies, further adaptive strategies are needed to address challenges in digital communication and ensure the effectiveness of advocacy initiatives.

The communication dynamics within IDAI underscore the importance of maintaining a balance between internal and external relationships in professional medical organizations. Strong internal communication fosters solidarity and enhances member engagement, while strategic external communication helps IDAI advocate for policies that support child health in Indonesia. These findings highlight the need for ongoing research on organizational communication effectiveness, particularly in the areas of digital engagement, media collaboration, and policy influence in the health sector.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that internal communication within the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI) is a critical element in maintaining organizational effectiveness and ensuring that all members share a consistent understanding of the organization's policies and programs. Based on interview data, it can be concluded that smooth and structured communication significantly facilitates better coordination between the central board, regional branches, and individual members. This aligns with Kurniawati et al. (2021), who emphasizes that effective internal communication not only improves organizational efficiency but also enhances member engagement across various organizational activities.

In the digital era, IDAI's adoption of communication technologies has accelerated information flow and increased member participation. With tools such as webinars, online discussion groups, and digital bulletins, members can easily access the latest updates without relying solely on in-person meetings. As Koontz et al. (1988) argue, the digital transformation of internal communication in professional organizations enhances collaboration and information accessibility among members. Nevertheless, despite the benefits of digitalization, challenges persist—particularly in terms of interpersonal engagement. As one interview respondent noted, while digital platforms offer efficiency, face-to-face interactions are still perceived as more meaningful in fostering close professional relationships. This observation is consistent with Auwen (2020), who underscores the irreplaceable role of in-person communication in cultivating a strong organizational culture.

In addition to internal communication, IDAI's external communication plays a significant role in child health advocacy in Indonesia. Interview data indicate that IDAI actively seeks to influence child health policy through strategic communication with the government and other stakeholders. This process involves not only submitting evidence-based policy recommendations but also engaging in strategic advocacy to ensure that IDAI's voice is heard in policy-making processes. Youngblood (2010) argue that organizations presenting data-driven recommendations are more likely to gain traction in public policy discussions.

Beyond governmental relations, IDAI's external communication includes outreach to the media and the general public. Mass media has become a vital tool for raising public awareness about child health issues. One respondent explained that campaigns conducted through mainstream and digital media have proven effective in disseminating information. This finding supports the study by Kurtz et al. (2017), which highlights the role of media in enhancing organizational visibility and strengthening public advocacy for specific issues. However, challenges remain in ensuring that information shared with the public is both accurate and accessible, especially for audiences without medical backgrounds. Coombs (2012)underscores that simplifying messages without compromising accuracy is essential for effective organizational communication with broader audiences.

One of the major challenges identified in this study is the spread of misinformation about child health, particularly on social media platforms. Misinformation regarding vaccination, for instance, poses a significant barrier to improving immunization coverage in Indonesia. One interviewee highlighted that IDAI frequently needs to clarify hoaxes circulating in the public sphere, especially concerning vaccine side effects. Fourianalistyawati (2015) found that organizations with proactive communication strategies are more capable of mitigating the harmful impact of misinformation in digital media. Accordingly, IDAI must strengthen its communication strategy by adopting a more proactive approach, including greater collaboration with health influencers and strategic use of social media to combat health-related hoaxes.

Further analysis indicates that synergy between IDAI's internal and external communications is vital to its organizational success. Strong internal communication allows the organization to coordinate policies and programs more efficiently, while strategic external communication ensures that messages delivered to government agencies and the public remain consistent and credible. Argenti (2007) suggests that organizations with robust internal communication are generally more capable of building effective external relationships because of their solid foundation in delivering coherent and strategic messages.

To enhance both internal and external communication effectiveness, IDAI should also consider adopting a more participatory communication approach. Interviews revealed that some members feel their involvement in decision-making processes could be improved. One respondent suggested that more inclusive discussion forums could enhance transparency and foster a stronger sense of ownership among members. This aligns with assertion that organizational communication involving active member participation tends to build a healthier and more sustainable organizational culture.

Furthermore, IDAI can enhance its communication effectiveness by providing specialized training for its members in public communication and media relations. Interview findings indicate that while IDAI has numerous experts in pediatric health, not all members possess the communication skills necessary to convey information effectively to lay audiences. Notoatmodjo (2005) found that organizations that equip their members with public communication skills are better positioned to deliver clearer and more persuasive messages to broader audiences.

This study confirms that communication plays a vital role in supporting professionalism and child health advocacy within IDAI. Both internal and external communications present their own challenges, which require adaptive and innovative strategies. While the digitalization of communication has brought many advantages, IDAI must find a balance between efficiency and interpersonal interaction. In external communication, the organization must continue to strengthen its evidence-based advocacy and develop more effective strategies to

combat misinformation that can jeopardize public health.

Looking ahead, IDAI may consider several strategies to further improve its communication effectiveness. One approach involves strengthening collaborations with other health organizations to expand the reach of its advocacy messages. Additionally, enhancing members' capacities in public communication and digital media usage is crucial to ensure that child health advocacy efforts are carried out more effectively. By refining both its internal and external communication dimensions, IDAI will be better positioned to fulfill its role not only as an academic and professional platform for pediatricians but also as a leading force in child health advocacy in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

The communication dynamics within the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI) underscore the critical importance of maintaining a balance between internal and external relationships in a professional medical organization. Effective internal communication enables the organization to foster solidarity and enhance member engagement, while strategic external communication supports IDAI in advocating for policies that promote child health in Indonesia.

This balance between internal cohesion and external influence forms the foundation for IDAI's success in both professional development and public health advocacy. By continuing to strengthen both dimensions, IDAI can further position itself as a leading medical professional body that not only unites pediatricians across the country but also plays a decisive role in shaping national child health policies.

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