

Communication Barriers between Parents and Teachers Marie Joseph School in the Age of Distance Learning

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Abstract

Pandemic brought a very significant learning change. All levels of education are urged to transform and adapt to the distance learning process. Learning takes place through technology-based platforms, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WebEx and so on. Communication between schools and student's changes from face-to-face communication to virtual communication. During this distance learning, parents increasingly play a role in assisting the child's learning process. In this case, effective communication becomes a very important aspect. Unfortunately, one of the challenges in this distance learning period is the possibility of miscommunication occurring between students, parents and teachers. Thus, this research aims to gather data on communication barriers between parents and teachers and their challenges during distance learning in Marie Joseph School, Jakarta. The Research Methods is a comparative research method with a questionnaire instrument. The study was conducted at the Marie Joseph School in South Jakarta, Indonesia and focused on communication barriers between parents and teachers at the kindergarten and elementary school levels. The result shows communication barriers between parents-teachers and vice versa in Marie Joseph School is not found. Considering this finding, it is recommended that the Blended Learning program can be applied at the Marie Joseph School once face to face learning in the classroom allowed by Indonesia's Government. The school's management of Marie Joseph School is also recommended to establish a Parent's Committee to support the student's learning process through parent's committee programs such as regular Parents Gathering & Discussion.

Keywords: *communication, effective communication, communication barriers, distance learning, covid-19.*

INTRODUCTION

The novel human Coronavirus or Covid-19 firstly found in Wuhan China in 2019 and subsequently spread globally as the fifth pandemic after the 1918 flu pandemic (Zhu et al. 2020). The impact of Covid-19 pandemic has been massive to all aspects of humanity (Ciotti, 2020). Social distancing has been practiced since the pandemic hit globally, the scientist tested the best medication and the vaccines to reduce the symptom of the virus in the human body, the economic growth in many countries endures congestion as the effect of social distancing, as well as education around the world must change the learning mode from offline meetings to online meetings in order to make sure the students still study

properly though they have to study from home while maintaining their health. Digital technology became the ultimate solution for human beings to stay connected to each other during this pandemic. E-learning as the integration between technology and education has become a powerful learning medium which uses internet connection (Kustandi et al, 2021). During the pandemic, e-learning has become the fundamental basis to develop distance learning. Teachers, parents and students have been familiar with e-learning during this pandemic. The same thing said by Dhawan, the shift from face-to-face lectures to online classes is the only possible solution, it is a necessity (Dhawan, 2020). One of the consequences of consistent distance learning is that parents must be involved intensively to communicate with the teachers in order to ensure their children understand the instructions given during distance learning. Sonnenschein, Grossman and Grossman (2021) in their research entitled U.S. Parents' Reports of Assisting Their Children with Distance Learning during COVID-19, stated the role of parents during distance learning in perspective communication is receiving or reading emails from anyone affiliated with the school (teachers, administrators, etc.), listening/attending sessions for parents, reading emails from her teachers, communicating with teachers via email or telephone, listening in on the homeroom session that has a part for parents and reaching out to teachers regarding assignments. Based on that, distance learning is the interaction between students, parents, and teachers to make sure the students are still able to learn during the social distance. Distance learning between them is considered as a way of communication.

According to Mazelfi & Misra (2020), establishing communication is indeed the most important feature in the learning process's success. Even though there is no face-to-face communication, it is believed that communication with teachers can support their learning outcomes. This perception then forms their confidence that their learning outcomes and learning performance will be good. Successful collaboration can be obtained by using multiple, media-based communication such as email, google-docs, Facebook, texting, and phone calls (Ishii et al, 2019).

Based on the empirical experiences by teachers, parents and students during distance learning around Indonesia, many have experienced that they face tough challenges to develop the student's competence during distance learning; the challenges occurred in various terms such as the providence of signals due to demographic location or the unavailability of gadgets for all the students, the schools' human resources who have not yet equipped to conduct learning remotely, the students who consider the "Learning from home" as holiday, and parents who still need to work during the pandemic or even worse parents must experience lay-off phenomenon during the pandemic. As we know that learning is not only the transfer of knowledge but its objectives are also to improve the skills and shape the students' characters continuously. The social distancing consequences in learning is transferring the knowledge, skill, and character must be carried out through synchronous and asynchronous online learning methods. Firstly, educators, parents, and students must adapt with the technology, figure out ways to carry out effective online learning and accept that not all competence can be taught through online learning. According to SMERU through Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) about Learning Loss during Distance Learning, distance learning causes the decrease of literacy

ability of the students because the competence is unable to be transferred wholly through video conferencing or text application.

Secondly, based on the fact that Indonesia has been through the disparity of education quality throughout the years and the pandemic worsens this issue. Most students are not provided by the proper gadget to join the online learning, internet connection limitation in many regions in Indonesia, most parents who have to work during online learning and have little time to supervise and scaffold their children learning process because students only meet their teachers through the video conferencing and text-message application. It is concluded that distance learning during this pandemic is a huge complexity which if not handled by teachers and parents through effective communication will definitely result in many misunderstandings. Primasari and Zulela (2021) also stated that the obstacles faced by parents during distance learning were accompanying children to study at home. This causes parents to feel stressed and more irritable. Parents also participate as teachers to assist children in learning. From the teacher's point of view, the obstacles faced by teachers during distance learning is to maintain the communication between teachers and parents intensely and smoothly. In terms of the learning facility, Sari and Maningtyas (2020) believe that parents must provide learning facilities, such as the use of gadgets and internet services and the understanding of learning materials/topics.

Communication is the exchange of information, verbally and through bodily expression, between two or more people in order to influence the occurrence of action, ideas or thoughts, at work, in leisure or community pursuits, or in individuals' domestic lives (Murdock and Scutt, 2003).

The goal of communication is to reach the same understanding between both sides who communicate with each other. There are many aspects that influence the success of communication including the barriers which occur during communication. As stated by Elearn (2007) that during the communication process, our messages may be blocked or distorted. This can happen at various stages of the communication process: the sender may not code the message effectively, the medium may be inappropriate or affected by external factors such as noise, and the receiver may not have the knowledge or skill to decode the message. The problem often lies in attitudes, in other words in the way we deliver a message and the ability or willingness of our audience to receive it.

It is inferred that direct communication in the classroom has the chance to not successfully reach the same understanding between teachers and students, for instance the students who are thinking about other topics when the teacher is explaining the lesson, the students may perceive different understanding and meaning because there are several communication barriers that might occur. Then, how about online communication through distance learning during the social restrictions? Some barriers may be added to this situation, such as lack of signal, bugs during distance learning, and even lack of focus from the sender and receivers.

Therefore, this research is conducted in Marie Joseph kindergarten and elementary school to gain the empirical information whether communication barriers occur during distance learning. This research involves 49 respondents including parents and teachers in Marie Joseph School, kindergarten and elementary level.

Effective Communication and Communication Barriers during Distance Learning

Communication is a managerial skill that is at the heart of our ability to form relationships and motivate your colleagues. It is also one of the most frequently cited problems in organizations and if handled badly, can lead to breakdowns in the interaction between the organization and its stakeholders (Elearn, 2007).

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Communication Stage and Source of Communication Barriers

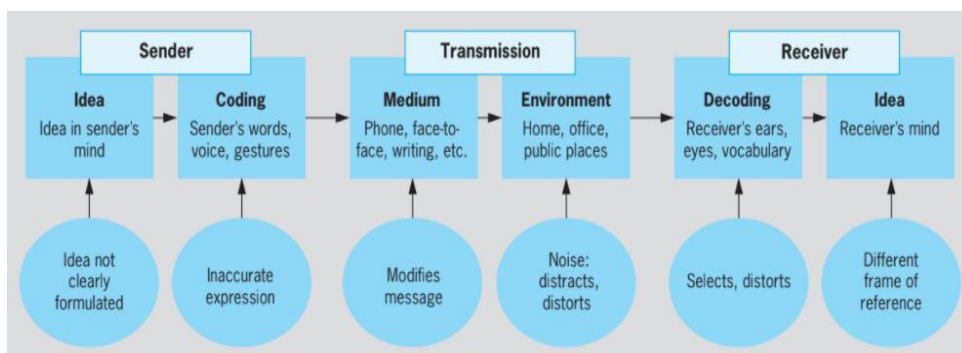


Figure 1. Stage of the communication process

Source: Elearn (2007)

Communication barrier is anything which can hinder people who communicate to share the same meaning. There are several barriers in communication during the stages of communication such as: ideas not clearly formulated, inaccurate expression, message modification, noise/distracts/distorts, and different frame of references.

According to Urai (2016) there are 5 kinds of barriers to effective communication, including: 1) Attitudinal barriers, 2) Behavioral barriers, 3) Cultural barriers, 4) Language barriers and 5) Environment Barriers. Attitudinal barriers caused by different people who have different values, attitudes, and discrimination which lead to different perceptions towards something. Behavioral barriers are bias, generalizations, and stereotyping. Cultural barriers result from different cultures and backgrounds. Language barriers occur when people do not speak the same language, even people who speak the same language go

through some barriers to share the same meaning. The last is environmental barriers which appear from the situation of the surroundings such as noise, distance and proximity.

Dabaj (2011) also concludes that effective communication is very important in distance learning. One of the barriers in effective communication is technological barriers, cultural barriers, physical or emotional barriers. From a communication perspective, distance learning of education simultaneously offers a lot of convenience as well as challenges. Paradoxically as a technology used for distance learning, education has become easier, cheaper, globalized and more user-friendly, however the challenges faced by participants are also increasingly complex. The main barrier faced is the communication barrier. Berge (2013) said that communication barriers have a hierarchy in distance education, namely technical, psychological, social, cultural, and contextual.

Communication is not only important for the managerial field yet the process of learning in the classroom also needs effective communication to create the same meaning and understanding between students and teachers. No one ever imagines that our students around the globe must learn online for more than a year due to Covid-19 outbreak. During interactions in the face-to-face meeting in the classroom, parent's involvement is very little yet during online learning parents hold one of the most important leads to connect their children with the teachers online and ensure their children grasp the correct instructions given by the teachers through the screen or learning management system.

Online learning is defined as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students" (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The same thing was conveyed by Nguyen (2015) that online learning will be able to provide a world class education to anyone, anywhere, and anytime as long as they have access to the Internet.

Adedoyin, O., B. & Soykan, E. (2020) state that the success of online learning elements is technology driven, and dependent on internet facilities, educational institutions can collaborate with telecommunication industries to either subsidize the cost of internet subscriptions or provide free browsing data to the students and instructors as part of their corporate social responsibilities. From the student side, based on Adnan & Anwar's (2020) research, online learning has proven to be helpful in maintaining student health in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also shows that educational organizations need to improve curricula and design appropriate content for online learning. From the teacher side, one of the successes of distance learning according to Azhar & Fajri (2021) is to provide guidance and guidelines for implementing distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are urgently needed by teachers.

According to Rajiv, Sociv, Ignou (2014), there are some issues and challenges faced during distance learning such as: 1) the suitable technology based on the requirements of users/students. 2) the development of interactive distance learning including the system development, personalization based on the need of user/students, technique to support

and promote interactions, develop the learning communities, and support for assessment. 3) Developing new knowledge for distance learning facilities. 4) The continuous research on distance learning, distance learning is a complex system with different levels of user/student interest. An essential decision is very important to take in every cycle of distance learning.

A study conducted by Ventayin (2018) on the readiness of Teachers to online teaching, showed that despite the limited experience in distance education such as technical skills, time management, knowledge and attitude in online education, they were still able to cope with the trends in distance learning. However, Bahasoan, Ayuandiani, Mukhram, & Rahmat (2020) concluded that the online learning system conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic is effective and inefficient. Effectively implemented because of the conditions that require online study and inefficient because the costs incurred more when compared with offline lectures. Costs incurred mainly to buy internet quota to keep up with online lectures.

Amidst the outbreak, online platforms are needed where (a) video conferencing with at least 40 to 50 students is possible, (b) discussions with students can be done to keep classes organic, (c) internet connections are good, (d) lectures are accessible in mobile phones also and not just laptops, (e) possibility of watching already recorded lectures, and (f) instant feedback from students can be achieved and assignments can be taken (Basilaia et al., 2020). Distance learning has many downsides, one of which is the lack of live participation, which is an important aspect of *social pedagogy* particularly in relation to the evident lack of inclusive activities (such as sport practices) (Ferraro, et al, 2020). However, distance learning is the only option school has to keep the learning process from happening during the outbreak.

The research questions from Communication Barriers between Parents and Teachers Marie Joseph School in the Age of Distance Learning are; 1) Is there any effect of Communication Barriers on Parents and Teachers Marie Joseph School in the Age of Distance Learning? 2) What are the Communication Barriers between Parents and Teachers Marie Joseph School in the Age of Distance Learning? 3) Are there any Program Recommendations for Facilitating Distance Learning between Parents and Teachers Marie Joseph School in the Age of Distance Learning Marie Joseph School?

METHOD

This research is conducted using a comparative research method with a questionnaire instrument. According to Esser and Vliegthart (2018), comparative communication research is a combination of substance (specific investigative objects studied in the context of different macro levels) and method (identification of differences and similarities following established rules and using equivalent concepts) (p. 4). They also explain is a synthesis that concludes that comparative communication research involves a comparison between at least two macro-level cases (system, culture, market, or its sub-elements) where at least the object of inquiry is relevant to the field of communication (p. 2).

The comparative research method is comparative descriptive, which uses the similarities of the subject matter. Thus, this study will explain the similarities and differences in communication barriers parents and teachers face. Overall, this study explains whether or not communication barriers occur between parents and teachers during distance learning. The research was conducted at Marie Joseph School, a private Catholic school implementing distance education. This research is limited to the research object, namely parents and teachers at the kindergarten and elementary levels.

Sampling technique used is simple random sampling, random selection of a small segment of individuals or members of the entire population (West, 2016). The respondents of this study were 49 respondents consisting of 22 kindergarten and elementary teachers and 27 parents from kindergarten and elementary. The research object is to answer and compare the same question regarding communication barriers between parents and teachers. The questions in the questionnaire are based on research variables. The variables in this study are barriers to effective communication, namely Environment, Language, Culture, Perception, and Organization. Each key point variable is derived into a question in the questionnaire.

The reason for choosing kindergarten and elementary is that according to Jean Piaget in development and learning theories, there are stages of children's cognitive development. These stages are sensory-motor stage (0–2 years), pre-operational (2–7 years), concrete operational (7–11 years) and formal operational (11–15 years). In understanding the world actively, children use schemas, assimilation, accommodation, organization and equilibration. Children's knowledge is formed gradually in line with the experience of the information encountered (Lefa, 2014). Same as conveyed by Stites, Sonnenschein & Galczyk (2021) that attending preschool is important because of the positive association between such attendance and the development of children's academic, social/emotional, and executive skills needed for kindergarten readiness. By engaging in rich, social conversations with other children and adults in the preschool classroom, a child's academic and social skills improve. However, distance learning can run effectively, if there is parental intervention.

So that children at the age of kindergarten and elementary need concrete or hands-on learning, while during a pandemic, children are required to take distance learning. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that kindergarten and elementary children are the most affected by distance learning. The comparative analysis begins with comparing the answers to the questionnaire between parents and teachers. The researcher then analyzed the answers of each research respondent. Moreover, the comparative analysis of answers between parents and teachers concluded no communication barriers between parents and teachers during long distances at Marie Joseph School.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Several facts were revealed when parents and teachers answered the questions in the questionnaire. A comparison of answers between parents and teachers is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Answers between Parents and Teachers

Communication Barriers	Point of Questionnaire	Parents	Teachers
Environment: physical or emotional barriers	Communicate with each other	Very often	Very often
	Has trouble articulation of words (e.g., sounds wabbit for rabbits)	Sometimes	Seldom
	Experiencing sound disturbances (e.g., noise or noise)	Sometimes	Seldom
	Experiencing technological interference (e.g., internet/gadget /signal)	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Feel the ease (easy) and comfortable	Often	Often
	Physical conditions (health) interfere with communication	Never	Never
	The situation of the house/room interferes with communication	Seldom	Seldom

	Feel happy in communicating	Often	Often
	Feeling reluctant to communicate	Never	Never
	Feeling angry in communication	Never	Never
Language barriers	Understanding in receiving information	Understand	Understand
	Understanding of the language used	Understand	Understand
Culture barriers	Friendly in communication	Friendly	Friendly
	Politeness in communication	Polite	Polite
	Reflects simplicity in communication	Often	Often
Perception's barriers	Using assumptions or perceptions in receiving information	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Paying attention to social status (Teacher - Parents)	Never	Sometimes
	Immediately draw conclusions (conclude) on the information received	Often	Often

	Using confidence or trust in the information received	Often	Sometimes
The organization barriers	Provision of media/channels as a place to communicate	Provide	Provide
	Sparing time to communicate	Sparing the time	Sparing the time
	Willingness to cooperate or cooperative	Willing to	Willing to
	Being apathetic/ignorant in communicating	Never	Sometimes

Respondents in this study were parents and teachers who had the same level of education, namely, graduating with a bachelor's degree. The majority live in the Kelapa Gading area, North Jakarta, and are 30 to 40 years old, with middle to upper economic levels.

From the data above, it can be seen that during distance learning, communication between parents and teachers is getting more intense. Almost all respondents, namely parents, often communicate with teachers and vice versa; teachers also very often communicate with parents.

There are five barriers to effective communication. The first barrier is environmental: physical or emotional barriers, disturbances that can be seen physically or emotionally. It can be seen from the table above that parents sometimes experience sound disturbances (noise) and technological interference (internet, gadgets, signals). In contrast, teachers rarely experience sound disturbances (noise) and technological interference (internet, gadgets, signals). Parents and teachers also often feel ease and comfort when communicating. Parents or teachers have also never faced disturbances in physical conditions (health) when communicating. The situation of the house or room is also rarely faced by parents and teachers. As for emotional barriers, parents and teachers both feel happy when communicating. Parents and teachers never feel reluctant to communicate or get angry when communicating.

The second barrier is the language. A prime example of language barrier can cause 'text or written language' in sending messages, telephones and emails. Although the message may be straightforward to reach, it does not mean that others will understand the message. The second barrier with language is that people assume words have the same meaning for everyone. People's understanding of a word is influenced by background knowledge, culture, and experience. Referring to the understanding of information and the language used when communicating, it can be seen from the data above that parents and teachers both understand the information conveyed or received and also understand the language used.

The next is cultural barriers. Culture can impact the interpretation of non-verbal signals. The non-verbal signals contained in the questionnaire are friendly, polite and reflect simplicity in communication. For this reason, it can be seen from the data above that both parents and teachers are friendly, polite and reflect simplicity in communicating. Which means, parents and teachers do not experience cultural barriers.

The fourth barrier is perception barriers. Perception is often 'invisible' and unconscious and undetected. The term 'perception' covers many thought processes, including assumptions and subconscious attitudes that inform values and beliefs. Different perceptions can form a significant barrier to communication. Because perception is often 'invisible' and undetected, in some cases, perception is used to manipulate people's thinking. It can be seen in the data above that parents and teachers sometimes use assumptions or perceptions in receiving information. Parents and teachers also often make their conclusions from the information received and often use confidence or trust in the information received. It does not become communication barriers between parents and teachers.

The last barrier is the organizational barriers. The organization, or in this study, the school can be a barrier or a disturbance in communication. For example, the limited media or channel as a forum for communication between parents and teachers. However, the data above reveals that schools provide media or channels for parents and teachers to communicate. Parents and teachers also communicate with each other and are willing to collaborate or cooperate to support each other's learning activities.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to gather data on communication barriers between parents and teachers and their challenges during distance learning. Although this study found no communication barriers between parents and teachers, it should be noted that this research was conducted in November 2021, which has been more than a year since parents and teachers faced distance learning. Hence, there is a possibility that parents and teachers have adapted to distance learning when research was conducted. This research also brings novelty because (1) the phenomenon under study occurs during a pandemic, (2) detects barrier communication in schools during a pandemic, (3) provides recommendations on the importance of school committee activities during the current pandemic, and (4) has not there are studies like this.

There is some limitation in this paper, which is that the research subjects are 49 respondents consisting of 22 kindergarten and elementary teachers and 27 parents from kindergarten and elementary. If the research is also conducted on parents and teachers of junior and senior high school students, the study results may be deeper and more diverse. We can also find out whether there is a barrier to effective communication and the needs of parents and teachers for this distance learning.

As a suggestion for the future, research like this needs to be carried out in various schools with various backgrounds and school situations. Research can be done in private and public schools. It is also good to do it in suburban areas or small towns.

From the questionnaires distributed, eleven parents and ten teachers answered that they communicated very often during the distance learning period. When referring to Environment: physical or emotional barriers, eleven parents answered that they sometimes had trouble articulating words (e.g., wabbit sounds for rabbits), and nine teachers answered that they rarely had trouble articulating words (e.g., sounds wabbit for rabbits). For sound disturbances, fourteen parents who chose the answers sometimes experienced sound disturbances (e.g., noise or noise) and nine teachers who answered seldom experienced sound disturbances (e.g., noise). For technological interference, sixteen parents and seven teachers answered that they sometimes experienced technological interference (e.g., internet/gadget/signal). Fourteen parents and fifteen teachers feel at ease (easy) and comfortable while communicating. Regarding physical conditions (health) that interfere with communication, as many as eighteen parents and eleven teachers answered that they never experienced physical conditions (health) interfere with communication. For a situation where the house/room interferes with communication, twelve parents and nine teachers answered that they seldom experienced the situation of the house/room. From the side of feeling happy communicating, fourteen parents and twelve teachers feel happy. Sixteen parents and thirteen teachers never felt reluctant to communicate, and finally, twenty parents and fifteen teachers never felt angry in communication.

Regarding language barriers, there were twenty parents and eighteen teachers understanding in receiving information and nineteen parents and eighteen teachers answering understanding of the language used in their communication.

From the questionnaire results referring to cultural barriers, eighteen parents and seventeen teachers answered friendly communication. As many as sixteen parents and sixteen teachers also answered politeness in communication. Regarding reflecting simplicity in communication, as many as twenty parents and fourteen teachers answered often reflect simplicity in communication.

When referring to perceptions barriers, particularly regarding using assumptions or perceptions in receiving information, as many as twelve parents and eight teachers answered using assumptions or perceptions in receiving information, in terms of paying

attention to social status (Teacher - Parents), eight parents answered never paying attention to social status (Teacher - Parents) but when viewed from the teacher's perspective, as many as seven teachers answered sometimes paying attention to social status (Teacher - Parents). Furthermore, as many as eleven parents and nine teachers answered immediately often to conclude on the information received. Thirteen parents answered often using confidence or trust in the information received, and nine teachers answered sometimes using confidence or trust in the information received. However, it does not become a communication barrier between parents and teachers from the answers above.

Furthermore, from the organization barriers, it can be seen that as many as twenty-six parents and fifteen teachers are willing to provide media/channels as a place to communicate. Twenty-seven parents and twenty-two teachers are willing to spare time communicating with each other. Again, as many as seventeen parents and sixteen teachers are willing to cooperate or cooperate in communicating.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that most of the respondents experience few environments: physical or emotional barriers, language barriers, culture barriers, perception's barriers and the organization barriers.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it is found that parents and teachers in Marie Joseph School very often communicate during distance learning. The comparison result shows that no communication barriers occur during distance learning between parents and teachers at Marie Joseph School. The parents and teachers experience few environments: physical or emotional barriers, language barriers, culture barriers, perception's barriers and the organization barriers.

Based on this result, blended learning as the combination of face to face and online learning is recommended to facilitate learning during this outbreak in Marie Joseph School. Despite the fact that communication barriers do not occur between parents and students, face to face learning is still recommended to be carried out to maximize the achievement of students' competence (cognitive, skill, and affective) and to lessen learning loss as the impact of continuous distance learning.

Considering the importance of parents' role during distance learning, Marie Joseph school can also establish a Parent's Committee and activate regular programs such as Parents Community Gathering and Discussion. The existence of a parent community is very essential to clear-up misunderstandings and speed-up the effective communication between parents and teachers during distance learning. Through this committee, parents can share the challenges they face in assisting children to learn, create a harmonious, comfortable, and productive atmosphere for students, and motivate parents to contribute and support school activities.

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