**Expose: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi**, Vol. 8(1), April, 2025
ISSN 2620-8105 | E-ISSN 2621-0304

# Validating the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms in the Workplace: A Conceptual and Empirical Study

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**Abstract.** In contemporary organizational settings, communication is increasingly recognized as a functional and strategic competency with implications for collaboration, performance, and culture. Despite this, few empirically grounded communication models address the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Southeast Asian workplaces, particularly in Indonesia. This study investigates the workplace applicability of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms proposed by Ginting, using a structured 56-item survey administered to 116 professionals across various industries. Each paradigm was operationalized through multiple items, and internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.737–0.917$). The findings demonstrated high construct reliability and strong participant alignment with the framework. Marked attention was given to empathy, data-driven communication, and process orientation, while culturally embedded elements—such as *sungkan* (reluctant courtesy)—revealed significant contextual nuance. These insights robustly confirm the model's relevance for training, communication audits, and future cross-cultural research initiatives.

**Keywords:** smart communication, workplace communication, communication paradigms, Indonesian workplace, intercultural communication, organizational communication

## Introduction

Effective communication functions as the connective tissue of modern organizations. As workplaces become more hybrid and interdependent, professionals are expected to engage not only with clarity but also with empathy, responsiveness, and strategic alignment to shared goals. Communication breakdowns—ranging from ambiguous instructions to culturally misaligned messaging—continue to impede organizational performance and cohesion (Clampitt, 2016; Daft, 2020).

The cultural complexity of the workplace demands particular attention within Indonesia. The interplay between high-context communication norms (Hall, 1976), hierarchical relationships, and indirectness often creates challenges for direct, transparent dialogue. Yet, existing communication models tend to generalize from Western frameworks, leaving a gap in the literature for approaches that account for localized values such as *sungkan*. Ginting (2015, 2017) developed the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms, a framework that merges global communication theory with Indonesian workplace realities, to address this.

While the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms are conceptually coherent and practically relevant, their acceptance and applicability have not been empirically validated. Research on communication practices in Southeast Asian workplaces, particularly those influenced by local cultural norms, remains limited. Much of the prevailing scholarship

continues to rely on Western-derived models, with fewer studies addressing frameworks that originate within the regional context (Weder, 2021).

This study aims to bridge that gap by empirically validating the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms through survey data collected from Indonesian professionals. The focus specifically lies on internal construct validity—examining whether the survey items coherently measure the theoretical dimensions of each paradigm and whether professionals perceive the constructs as both relevant and distinct.

Two guiding questions frame the investigation: (1) *Do Indonesian professionals perceive the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms to be valid and relevant to their workplace experience?; (2) Are the paradigms internally consistent and structurally reliable, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha?*

The framework under examination is both locally conceptualized and theoretically anchored, integrating classical communication principles with insights drawn from culturally embedded organizational behaviors in Indonesia.

Organizational communication has traditionally been viewed through multiple lenses, functional, interpretive, and critical (Miller, 2015). Functionally, it concerns the transmission of information to achieve goals; interpretively, it involves making meaning and building culture; and critically, it examines power dynamics, voice, and inclusion. Communication affects leadership (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002), trust (Jo & Shim, 2005), innovation (Tourish, 2019), and resilience (Mishra et al., 2014).

Effective communication extends beyond "clear language" to encompass strategic message design, audience-focused framing, and adaptation to specific situations. The Seven Smart Communication Paradigms examined in this study align with this holistic view by integrating cognitive (e.g., logic, clarity), behavioral (e.g., avoiding *sungkan*), and affective (e.g., tone, nonverbal signals) components of communication. Drawing on this integrated perspective, the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms provide a culturally attuned, theoretically grounded framework bridging universal communication principles with the specific interpersonal and organizational realities of the Indonesian workplace.

The Seven Smart Communication Paradigms introduced by Ginting (2015, 2017) are outlined as follows. Figure 1 illustrates this framework, highlighting the conceptual relationship among these paradigms.

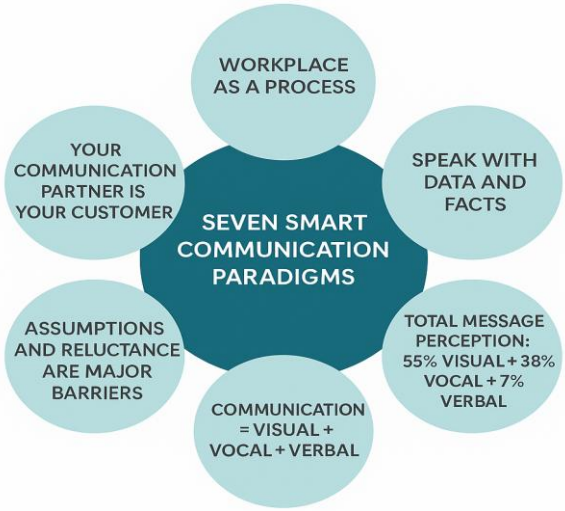


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms.

- Paradigm 1: Workplace as a Process. Emphasizing systemic thinking and interdependence among roles.
- Paradigm 2: Speak with Data & Facts. Encouraging evidence-based statements to replace speculation.
- Paradigm 3: Communication as a Process. Recognizing encoding, media, decoding, and feedback loops.
- Paradigm 4: Communication = Visual + Vocal + Verbal (C = 3V). Incorporating visual (body language), vocal (tone), and verbal (words).
- Paradigm 5: Total Message Perception (55% Visual + 38% Vocal + 7% Verbal). Based on Mehrabian's model (1971), meaning is derived more from nonverbal than verbal cues.
- Paradigm 6: Your Communication Partner is Your Customer. Shifting perspective to treat colleagues or stakeholders as internal customers.
- Paradigm 7: Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers. Promoting assertiveness and clarification to minimize ambiguity.

These paradigms are grounded in systems theory (Senge, 1990), process models (Shannon & Weaver, 1949), and nonverbal communication literature (Mehrabian, 1971).

Embracing paradigms such as the 3V Model—Visual, Vocal, and Verbal components of communication—and Total Message Perception is grounded in nonverbal communication theory. Mehrabian (1971) famously posited that 93% of communication impact comes from nonverbal cues (55% visual, 38% vocal), and only 7% verbal. While debated, this theory remains influential in emphasizing how much communication is conveyed not through words, but tone, gestures, and expressions.

These elements become even more critical in high-context cultures, where much of the message is "between the lines." Thus, Paradigms 4 and 5 reinforce the value of nonverbal literacy and challenge professionals to become more aware of how they are perceived.

Cultural elements such as *sungkan*, *ewuh pakewuh* (deferential reluctance), and a collectivist orientation strongly influence communication dynamics in Indonesian workplaces (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural values highlight the importance of respecting hierarchy, maintaining social harmony, and avoiding confrontation. This often results in individuals suppressing their opinions, withholding questions, or delaying clarification. The concept of *sungkan*—a blend of politeness, reluctance, and deference—plays a central role in shaping interpersonal exchanges. As Irawanto (2009) explains, *sungkan* reflects a broader Javanese norm that prioritizes relational harmony and the avoidance of face-threatening acts, particularly in hierarchical contexts. While this cultural disposition reinforces social cohesion, it may unintentionally hinder open dialogue and timely decision-making in the workplace (Kim & Dodd, 2001).

Paradigm 7, which advocates for eliminating assumptions and reluctance in communication, directly addresses this cultural challenge by encouraging a shift toward openness and proactive clarification. This perspective aligns with emerging literature advocating for assertiveness training in Southeast Asia to enhance communication effectiveness, teamwork, and leadership performance (Guffey & Loewy, 2022). Recognizing sungkan and similar cultural constructs as potential communication barriers enables organizations to develop systems that are culturally sensitive and structurally conducive to clarity, feedback, and innovation.

Unlike global intercultural models such as Face-Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005) or Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 1995), which focus on psychological dynamics between cultures, the paradigms explored here are situated within the organizational routines of a single high-context society, emphasizing pragmatism over abstraction.

## Methodology

A quantitative survey was structured to measure participants' perceptions of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms. The instrument consisted of 56 items, with eight items representing each paradigm, derived directly from the definitions and theoretical explanations found in *Komunikasi Cerdas: Panduan komunikasi di dunia kerja* (Ginting, 2015, 2017). Each item was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The decision to include eight items per construct aligns with established practices in scale development, which recommend using between six to ten items per construct to ensure adequate content coverage, strong internal consistency and

sufficient statistical power for reliability and factor analysis (DeVellis, 2016; Hinkin, 1995; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003).

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to reach professionals from diverse sectors, including education, finance, healthcare, government, and technology. Eligibility criteria included current employment status, active involvement in workplace communication, and willingness to reflect critically on communication behaviors.

Although purposive sampling does not support broad generalization, it is widely accepted in early-phase instrument validation, particularly when participants are expected to engage meaningfully with specialized constructs. The final sample of 116 participants exceeded the commonly accepted threshold for scale validation studies using Cronbach's Alpha. Research literature consistently supports that a sample size of 100 or more is adequate for assessing the internal consistency of multi-item constructs (Nunnally, 1978; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, the sample's diversity across sectors, tenure, and job levels enhanced the content validity of the study and provided a meaningful basis for interpreting construct coherence within the Indonesian professional context.

The collected data was exported from Google Forms into a structured spreadsheet format and processed using spreadsheet software and statistical analysis tools. The survey comprised 56 items, organized into seven clusters representing the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms, with eight items per paradigm. Each item was scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

This scale enabled quantifying participant perceptions and facilitated statistical aggregation for each paradigm. Initial data cleaning involved the removal of incomplete or duplicate entries, the numeric coding of Likert responses, and the standardization of demographic classifications. All 116 responses met the inclusion criteria and were retained for analysis. Each participant contributed data across all seven paradigm clusters, totaling 56 data points per participant.

Descriptive statistics were computed to provide a general overview of responses:

- Mean values refer to the average of a set of numbers. It is a measure of central tendency representing the typical value within a dataset, indicating the overall level of agreement with each item and paradigm.
- Standard deviation (SD) highlights the spread or variability of responses. A low standard deviation indicates that the data is closely clustered around the mean, while a high standard deviation shows that the data is more spread out.

- Minimum and maximum scores are used to detect any potential outliers or inconsistencies.

This analysis identified which paradigms received the strongest support and highlighted potential perceptual divergence among participants.

The internal consistency of each paradigm was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, a commonly used reliability coefficient in social science research (Nunnally, 1978). This measure indicates how well the items within a single paradigm cluster together statistically and measure the same underlying construct.

The following benchmarks were used to interpret alpha values:

- $\alpha \geq 0.90 \rightarrow$ Excellent internal consistency
- $\alpha \geq 0.80 \rightarrow$ Good
- $\alpha \geq 0.70 \rightarrow$ Acceptable
- $\alpha < 0.70 \rightarrow$ Questionable or Poor

The alpha coefficient was calculated from the responses to eight items for each of the seven paradigms. Paradigms with high reliability coefficients suggest well-constructed and coherent item groupings. Those with lower values may indicate the need for item revision, clarification, or a broader interpretation among participants.

The dataset was reviewed for several patterns and anomalies that could enrich interpretation in addition to reliability testing. These included:

- Trends in responses across demographic groups (e.g., length of service, industry).
- Consistently high or low-scoring items across paradigms.
- Potential redundancies or ambiguities in similarly worded statements.

These exploratory insights informed the interpretation of the paradigms' validity and highlighted areas for refining the survey instrument in future applications. They collectively provide useful context for the descriptive and inferential findings described in the following section.

While inferential techniques such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) or Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) are often utilized in advanced scale development, their application is neither necessary nor suitable at this investigation stage. The purpose of this study is not to develop a new theoretical construct but to assess the internal consistency and perceived relevance of an already well-defined conceptual framework.

Each of the seven paradigms in this study is grounded in an operational definition derived from prior theoretical and practical formulation (Ginting, 2015; 2017). Accordingly, the instrument was explicitly designed with no overlap between paradigms, and each item was developed to align exclusively with its corresponding construct. As such, no latent structure was theorized across paradigms, reinforcing the inapplicability of factor analysis at this stage.

The use of Cronbach's Alpha, supported by item-level descriptive statistics, is widely recognized in psychometric literature as sufficient for assessing reliability in early-phase

validation studies, especially when constructs are predefined and conceptually distinct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; DeVellis, 2016). Introducing factor analysis in this context would not only misrepresent the purpose of the research but could also compromise the methodological clarity achieved through focused construct testing.

As such, the analytical approach used here is both methodologically justified and academically sufficient. Further statistical modeling may be considered in future multi-sample or cross-cultural applications of the instrument, but it is not warranted in this context.

## Results and Discussion

*Demographic Profile of Survey Participants.* The participant pool consisted of 116 professionals from diverse industries and organizational roles. This range enhanced the contextual richness of the findings and improved the relevance of communication insights across different sectors.

*Length of Service at Current Workplace.* Participants reported varied tenures at their current organizations. The largest group (44.8%) had been employed for seven years or more, reflecting substantial organizational experience. This was followed by those with 1–3 years of service (24.1%) and 4–6 years (20.7%). A smaller proportion (10.3%) reported less than one year of tenure. This distribution balances perspectives from both seasoned professionals and newer entrants, offering a comprehensive view of workplace communication behavior (*see Appendix H*).

*Industry of Employment.* Participants represented more than 30 industries, underscoring the broad relevance of communication practices across sectors. The Education sector accounted for the highest share of responses (23.3%), followed by Manufacturing (11.2%), Technology (9.5%), Finance (5.2%), and both Healthcare and Consulting (4.3% each). Additional sectors such as Automotive, Energy, Food & Beverage, Services, State Institutions, and Trading were each represented by 2.6% of participants.

Several other industries made up smaller shares, each contributing either 1.7% or 0.9% to the total. These included Legal Services, Plantation, Contractor, Publishing, Real Estate, Retail, Tourism, Hotel, Mining, Labor Supply, Insurance, Advertising, National Distributor, Fashion, Construction, Aviation, Training, and Oil & Gas, among others. While individually limited in representation, their presence reflected the cross-sectoral interest in the subject matter (*see Appendix I*).

*Current Position Held.* The survey encompassed a wide range of professional roles. The largest group identified as Managers (32.8%), followed by Staff members (24.1%) and Directors (13.8%). Other reported positions included Supervisors (11.2%), Lecturers (4.3%), Consultants (3.4%), and Freelancers (2.6%). A small yet diverse group of participants, including a Commissioner, an Entrepreneur, a General Manager, and other distinct positions, each contributed 0.9% to the total sample. This distribution suggests that the study successfully gathered viewpoints from both strategic leadership and operational levels (*see*

*Appendix J*).Following this contextual overview of the participant profile, the next subsection presents descriptive findings for each paradigm based on the 56 Likert-scale items.

*Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results.* Each of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms was assessed through eight items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, totaling 56 items. The descriptive statistics revealed a strong consensus among participants, suggesting they generally perceive the paradigms as relevant and applicable to their professional settings. However, the varying standard deviations across different items and paradigms indicate differing levels of consistency and practical application. Below is a detailed interpretation of each paradigm:

*Paradigm 1: Workplace as a Process*

This paradigm was the most strongly endorsed, with mean scores ranging from 4.41 to 4.62 and standard deviations (SDs) as low as 0.55. Participants view communication as integrated within organizational processes rather than as separate actions. This low variability further confirms a shared cultural understanding that effective collaboration, coordination, and workflow rely heavily on transparent and integrated communication channels.

*Paradigm 2: Speak with Data and Facts*

Participants largely supported this paradigm, with mean scores ranging from 4.11 to 4.56 and SDs from 0.64 to 0.84. The data reflects strong agreement with the need for factual and evidence-based communication. Nevertheless, slightly lower scores on items related to assumption avoidance and information verification suggest that while the value is acknowledged, implementation may be inconsistent, potentially due to time constraints or access to reliable data.

Moving from content to structure, the third paradigm explores the internal flow of communication as a stepwise process.

*Paradigm 3: Communication as a Process*

This paradigm received moderate to high agreement, with means from 3.98 to 4.50 and standard deviations up to 0.96. While many participants acknowledged communication as a structured process, from encoding to feedback, the higher variability implies that such a process is not always systematically followed. This may indicate gaps in communication protocols or differences in role expectations and organizational communication cultures.

*Paradigm 4: Communication = Visual + Vocal + Verbal (C = 3V)*

This paradigm was widely accepted, with mean scores ranging between 3.92 and 4.34. It also exhibited one of the highest variances, with standard deviations reaching as high as 1.06. This indicates that although many people recognize the importance of nonverbal cues, some may either underutilize them or misunderstand their significance. Differences in factors such as job function, personal communication style, and prior training in presentation and public speaking may help explain these variations.

*Paradigm 5: Total Message Perception (55% Visual + 38% Vocal + 7% Verbal)*

This was the most polarizing paradigm, with mean scores ranging from 3.49 to 4.16 and SDs up to 1.10. Though many participants agreed that nonverbal communication is critical, others seemed skeptical or unfamiliar with the exact "3V ratio." Cultural nuances, particularly in Indonesian communication, where subtlety and tone are highly context-dependent, may influence these perceptions. These findings indicate that although the concept holds strong appeal, enhanced explanation or cultural contextualization may be required to ensure deeper comprehension.

Beyond process and perception, Paradigm 6 reframes communication through the lens of service orientation, emphasizing empathy and attentiveness.

*Paradigm 6: Your Communication Partner is Your Customer*

This paradigm demonstrated strong and consistent support, with means from 4.12 to 4.36 and standard deviations between 0.71 and 0.84. Participants showed a clear appreciation for empathetic, listener-focused communication. This alignment across the sample suggests that professionals widely adopt a service-oriented communication mindset, likely influenced by customer-centric corporate values and professional training.

*Paradigm 7: Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers*

This paradigm revealed the most cultural sensitivity, with means ranging from 3.08 to 4.43 and standard deviations as high as 1.33. While items promoting directness and clarity received high ratings, the lowest mean (3.08) was recorded for the statement regarding reluctance to ask questions due to *sungkan*—a culturally ingrained value that signifies discomfort or hesitance in challenging authority. This tension highlights the ongoing negotiation between traditional communication norms and modern workplace expectations in Indonesia.

**Table 1. Summary Table of Descriptive Results**

| Paradigm | Mean (Range) | SD (Range) | Min-Max per item | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1: Workplace as a Process | 4.41–4.62 | 0.55–0.72 | 2-5 | Very strong agreement, highly consistent |
| P2: Speak with Data & Facts | 4.11–4.56 | 0.64–0.84 | 1-5 | Strong agreement, moderate consistency |
| P3: Communication as a Process | 3.98–4.50 | 0.64–0.96 | 1-5 | Generally positive, slightly varied responses |
| P4: 3V Communication | | | | |
| P5: Total Message Perception | 3.92–4.34 | 0.67–1.06 | 1-5 | Moderately strong, with diverse experiences |
| P6: Your Communication Partner is Your Customer | 3.49–4.16 | 0.70–1.10 | 1-5 | Mixed results, some conceptual uncertainty |
| P7: Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers | 4.12–4.36 | 0.71–0.84 | 1-5 | Consistent agreement, strong shared beliefs |
| | 3.08–4.43 | 0.66–1.33 | 1-5 | Culturally nuanced; openness vs social norms. |

Beyond individual item interpretations, the next section identifies cross-paradigm trends and highlights cultural and organizational variables influencing how participants engage with these communication principles.

*Cross-Paradigm Observations*

The descriptive statistical analysis provides compelling empirical support for the validity and workplace relevance of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms. Across all paradigms, mean values predominantly range between 4.0 and 4.5, indicating consistently high levels of agreement among participants. While most paradigms demonstrate strong endorsement, standard deviations varied according to the concreteness of the statements, familiarity of the concepts, and cultural sensitivity embedded in the communication behaviors.

Several important cross-cutting patterns emerged:

*Strongest Support for Data, Structure, and Empathy (P2, P3, P6)*

Paradigms that emphasize fact-based communication (P2), structured messaging (P3), and audience-centered interaction (P6) received some of the highest mean ratings and lowest standard deviations in the dataset. This reflects a shared professional recognition of the importance of evidence, process, and perspective-taking in effective communication. These paradigms align closely with best practices in modern organizational behavior, likely

contributing to their widespread internalization and consistent endorsement. The clarity and practicality of these paradigms—especially when tied to real workplace tasks such as reporting, feedback, and collaboration—make them more accessible and easier to adopt.

*More Variation in Nonverbal and Culturally Embedded Paradigms (P4, P5, P7)*

Paradigms emphasizing nonverbal communication (P4 & P5) and culturally sensitive behavior (P7) displayed greater variability in responses despite general agreement.
Paradigm 5, which highlights the well-known "55-38-7" communication model, produced some of the widest standard deviations, indicating that not all participants interpret this framework uniformly.

Paradigm 7, which addresses reluctance to speak openly due to *sungkan*, captured, particularly, a wide range of responses—especially on items about reluctance in questioning or clarification. This suggests a gap between the ideal of direct communication and real-life barriers influenced by hierarchical norms and social courtesy common in Indonesian culture.

These results underscore the importance of contextual interpretation: even when a concept is theoretically accepted, its application may be constrained by cultural values, organizational hierarchy, or role expectations.

*Concrete Over Abstract: Framing Influences Agreement*

Items that presented concrete examples, such as workplace processes, customer service scenarios, or direct references to reporting practices, generally received higher mean scores and lower standard deviations than those that dealt with abstract concepts or communication theory. Participants seemed more confident evaluating situations they could personally relate to as opposed to interpreting theoretical claims or unfamiliar frameworks. For example, statements that addressed specific behaviors, such as "verifying data before sharing" or "adjusting tone to meet audience needs," received more consistent ratings than those describing generalized communication dynamics.

*Practical Implications and Areas for Development*

While overall support for the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms was strong, the data also indicated specific areas where targeted professional development may enhance application and understanding:

- Paradigms 4, 5, and 7 would greatly benefit from structured training programs that deepen awareness of nonverbal cues, introduce scientific models of message perception, and promote assertive yet culturally respectful communication techniques.
- Cultural coaching may further assist teams in navigating hierarchical interaction norms, helping to foster communication climates where openness and psychological safety coexist with respect for authority and tradition.

*Final Reflection and Future Outlook*

These findings affirm the psychological resonance and practical relevance of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms for professionals in Indonesia. At the same time, they emphasize the importance of context in interpreting and practicing communication frameworks.

Organizational culture, generational differences, and sector-specific dynamics all appear to play roles in shaping the adoption of these paradigms. This suggests a promising avenue for future research, particularly in exploring how the same paradigms might be received and applied across diverse industries, age groups, or organizational types, thereby refining their application for optimal impact in communication effectiveness.

This study was designed as a focused quantitative validation, although cultural dynamics such as *sungkan* are inherently complex and context-dependent. Qualitative components—such as interviews or narrative responses—were intentionally excluded to maintain methodological consistency and statistical clarity. Such an approach aligns with best practices in initial-scale validation, where reliability and item coherence are primary considerations. Mixed-method designs may be useful in subsequent research phases to explore behavioral nuance and cultural variation in greater depth. For the present analysis, however, a singular methodological lens ensures a disciplined evaluation of conceptual alignment across constructs.

These interpretive reflections set the stage for the next section, which evaluates the internal consistency of the paradigms using Cronbach's Alpha.

*Reliability Analysis: Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)*

Cronbach's Alpha (α) was computed for each of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms to assess the internal consistency of the survey instrument. Each paradigm comprises eight Likert-scale items designed to measure a single underlying communication belief or practice.

Cronbach's Alpha is a widely used reliability coefficient that indicates how closely related a set of items is as a group. An alpha score of 0.70 or higher is generally accepted as adequate for research purposes, while scores above 0.80 indicate good internal consistency, and those above 0.90 are considered excellent (Nunnally, 1978; Bonett & Wright, 2015).

Below is a detailed breakdown of the results and their interpretation:

**Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha**

| Paradigm Description | Cronbach's Alpha | Reliability Level |
|---|---|---|
| P1: Workplace as a Process | 0.890 | Excellent |
| P2: Speak with Data & Facts | 0.885 | Excellent |
| P3: Communication as a Process | 0.859 | Very Good |
| P4: 3V Communication | 0.900 | Excellent |
| P5: Total Message Perception | 0.901 | Excellent |
| P6: Your Communication Partner is Your Customer | 0.917 | Excellent |
| P7: Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers | 0.737 | Acceptable |

The following subsection offers a detailed analysis of the reliability values and interprets what they reveal about each paradigm's internal coherence.

The analysis revealed a consistently strong pattern across all paradigms. Five of the seven paradigms achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.859, signifying high internal alignment among their items. This indicates that participants understood and responded to items in each paradigm consistently and cohesively. The remaining two paradigms also met or exceeded the minimum reliability threshold, further reinforcing the credibility of the instrument.

Importantly, Paradigm 6, which emphasizes the view that "Your Communication Partner is Your Customer," recorded the highest alpha value ($\alpha = 0.917$). This suggests that participants deeply internalize the principle of empathetic, audience-centered communication and consistently apply it in their workplace interactions. In this context, high reliability may be supported by the growing focus on customer communication training and the development of service-oriented professional environments in Indonesia.

Likewise, Paradigm 5 (Total Message Perception (55% Visual + 38% Vocal + 7% Verbal)) and Paradigm 4 (3V Communication: Visual, Vocal, Verbal) both recorded alpha values over 0.90. This is particularly notable given that both paradigms involve nonverbal or perceptual dimensions of communication, which are often more abstract and culturally influenced. Their excellent internal consistency suggests that, regardless of individual differences in practical usage, the underlying concepts are well understood and consistently interpreted by participants.

High alpha values were also observed for Paradigm 1 (Workplace as a Process), Paradigm 2 (Speak with Data and Facts), and Paradigm 3 (Communication as a Process), with scores ranging from 0.859 to 0.890. These paradigms demonstrate process-oriented and factual communication styles, which are often highlighted in formal professional settings. The strong reliability in these paradigms reinforces the instrument's alignment with workplace communication practices that prioritize clarity, structure, and operational integration.

In contrast, Paradigm 7 (Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers) had the lowest reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.737$); still within an acceptable range. The lower alpha likely reflects the socio-cultural complexity embedded in this construction. Items in this context examine behaviors such as reluctance to ask questions or express disagreement, which may be influenced by cultural norms like *sungkan*, sensitivity to hierarchy, or the desire for interpersonal harmony. While the items measure a coherent theme, the variability in response likely reflects real and meaningful differences in how individuals experience these challenges, depending on their age, role, background, or organizational culture. Instead of being viewed as a limitation, this variation enriches the context and provides diagnostic value, highlighting areas where training or cultural adaptation might be particularly important.

Building on the reliability findings above, the next subsection synthesizes overarching reflections and explores their implications for theory, practice, and future application.

The reliability analysis results provide compelling evidence for the psychometric strength and practical relevance of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms. All paradigms exceeded the acceptable threshold for Cronbach's Alpha, and most achieved excellent internal consistency, demonstrating a high degree of coherence, clarity, and applicability across various professional contexts.

The strong reliability of paradigms centered on empathy, structure, and process—such as Paradigm 6 (Your Communication Partner is Your Customer) and Paradigms 1–3 (Process- and Data-Oriented Communication)—confirms that these communication principles are well understood, widely practiced, and culturally resonant. Participants consistently aligned with messages emphasizing clear task integration, data verification, and audience awareness. This alignment reflects the evolving demands of the modern workplace and the impact of professional communication training in Indonesia.

The high internal consistency of paradigms related to nonverbal communication—namely, the 3V model (Paradigm 4) and Total Message Perception (Paradigm 5)—is also noteworthy. Despite these paradigms involving more abstract or theory-driven content, participants demonstrated a strong conceptual grasp, suggesting that the role of visual and vocal cues in shaping meaning is not only theoretically sound but also experientially validated in the workplace.

Even the most culturally sensitive paradigm—Paradigm 7, which explores assumptions and communication reluctance—achieved acceptable reliability. While it

exhibited slightly more variability, this reflects the nuanced interplay between communication ideals and cultural practices such as *sungkan*, hierarchy, and indirectness. Rather than undermining the tool's consistency, this variation enhances its diagnostic value, revealing where deeper cultural reflection, contextual training, or generational bridging may be required.

The variation in Paradigm 7 highlights the instrument's sensitivity to cultural contexts, capturing important communication dynamics that might be overlooked by more generic or Western-centric models. Additionally, the strong performance of culturally nuanced paradigms—despite their inherent differences—demonstrates a rich interplay between universal communication values and local norms. This affirms the tool's relevance for both global and context-specific applications.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms form a psychometrically sound, conceptually unified, and culturally responsive framework. The tool effectively captures both universal principles of effective communication and the culturally embedded behaviors that shape communication dynamics in Indonesian professional environments.

The high internal consistency across constructs lays a solid foundation for the instrument's application in a variety of settings, including:

- Leadership development and communication training
- Organizational diagnostics and change initiatives
- Academic research and cross-cultural studies
- Strategic planning in HR and talent management

Ultimately, this reliability validates the instrument's design and confirms its practical resonance. The Seven Smart Communication Paradigms offer a structured yet adaptable framework for understanding, assessing, and improving communication in diverse workplace contexts, providing actionable insight for both individual growth and organizational transformation.

The results of this validation study affirm the conceptual relevance, clarity, and internal consistency of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms in the context of Indonesian professional environments. With consistently high levels of agreement and acceptable-to-strong Cronbach's Alpha values across all paradigms, the results demonstrate the model's perceived usefulness and empirical coherence as a structured framework for workplace communication.

The paradigms synthesize classical and contemporary communication theories, culturally localized to fit Indonesian workplace norms from a theoretical perspective. Paradigms such as Communication as a Process (P3) and 3V Communication (P4) reflect foundational models (e.g., Shannon & Weaver, 1949; Mehrabian, 1971), while others like assumptions and reluctance are Major Barriers (P7) extend those models by embedding them within specific socio-cultural contexts (Hofstede, 2001).

The model contributes to the broader field of communication theory in two significant ways:

- It demonstrates the feasibility of culturally grounded adaptations of global communication models in Southeast Asian contexts.
- It proposes a practitioner-friendly framework that aligns well with organizational psychology, internal communication practices, and managerial leadership theories (Keyton, 2017; Mishra et al., 2014).

Importantly, the study supports the idea that communication competence is not universal but is shaped by cultural expectations, organizational roles, and professional experiences (Weder, 2021). This has implications for scholars attempting to bridge theory and practice across cultures.

The practical implications of this study are significant for human resource development, leadership training, and workplace culture initiatives. The high agreement with paradigms like Speak with Data and Facts (P2) and Your Communication Partner is Your Customer (P6) suggests that professionals value clarity, responsibility, and empathy in communication—traits often linked to higher employee satisfaction and productivity (Jo & Shim, 2005). Organizations can leverage these findings by:

- Embedding the paradigms into internal communication guidelines or policies.
- Incorporating the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms into soft skill training programs, especially for mid-level and emerging leaders.
- Developing assessment tools or communication audits based on these paradigms to diagnose and improve communication climates.

Furthermore, the model can serve as a common language for communication evaluation, especially in performance reviews, team feedback sessions, or onboarding processes. The cultural alignment of Paradigm 7, though variably received, can catalyze constructive conversations around communication discomfort and professional assertiveness in Indonesian workplaces.

One of the most notable insights is the variation in responses across paradigms, particularly those dealing with nonverbal communication and cultural hesitation. While Paradigms 2 and 6 were clearly embraced, Paradigms 4, 5, and 7 showed more spread in scores, suggesting:

- A need exists for more context-specific examples to ensure a comprehensive understanding of abstract concepts, such as the 3V model.
- Possible generational or sectoral differences in how communication directness and emotional tone are managed.
- Space for flexibility in implementation, allowing teams to adapt these paradigms to their specific communication culture and organizational needs.

These findings align with contemporary leadership and communication research emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies tailored to team dynamics, context, and individual styles (Clampitt, 2016; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). Taken as a whole, they provide a basis for concluding how the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms support communication effectiveness within Indonesian organizational contexts.

## Broader Regional and Cultural Implications

Although this study is grounded in the Indonesian context, the communication paradigms validated here may also be relevant for other Southeast Asian countries that exhibit high-context communication styles. Cultures such as those in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam similarly emphasize relational harmony, indirect expression, and deference to hierarchy in workplace settings.

Paradigm 7's exploration of *sungkan*, for example, aligns with comparable concepts such as *kreng jai* in Thailand and *hiya* in the Philippines. These cultural parallels point to the possibility of adapting the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms beyond Indonesia. With proper calibration, the framework has potential for use in regional training programs and cross-cultural communication research across ASEAN.

Frameworks that balance universal communication principles with local behavioral norms are becoming increasingly important as organizations in Southeast Asia continue to expand across borders. This study contributes to that goal by providing a validated model that is culturally relevant, reflecting both the intricacies and the similarities of workplace communication in the region.

In sum, the findings confirm the internal consistency and conceptual strength of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms, while also highlighting their value as a strategic tool for improving workplace communication across diverse organizational settings. The paradigms show a high degree of practical relevance, clarity, and adaptability to different communication needs.

Their strong cultural embeddedness also provides a distinct advantage in non-Western contexts, helping to address enduring gaps in dominant communication theories that often overlook regionally grounded perspectives. This cultural responsiveness enhances their relevance and positions the paradigms as a meaningful contribution to both scholarly discourse and practical communication development in diverse professional settings.

Building on these findings and interpretations, the final section draws overall conclusions and proposes actionable recommendations for organizational practice, communication training, and future research.

## Conclusion

This study set out to empirically validate the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms (Ginting, 2015, 2017), a conceptual framework that seeks to enhance workplace

communication in the Indonesian professional context. The paradigms aim to guide professionals in understanding communication as a strategic, contextual, and interpersonal process, bridging classical theory with modern, culturally embedded practices.

A survey of 116 professionals produced findings that strongly support the empirical validity of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms. Participants across multiple sectors and job roles reported strong consensus with most paradigms, especially those emphasizing clarity, data-based dialogue, and audience orientation. Internal reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha demonstrated that most paradigms either met or exceeded acceptable standards, reinforcing the coherence and consistency of the item groupings.

At the same time, the findings pointed to variability in acceptance of certain paradigms, particularly those related to nonverbal cues and cultural assertiveness (e.g., avoiding *sungkan*). This nuanced response reflects the complex nature of Indonesian workplace dynamics, where hierarchical norms and indirect communication styles coexist with a growing demand for openness, feedback, and agility.

The results affirm that the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms are conceptually valid and resonate with real-world professional experiences. They are relevant across various industries and can be tailored to align with organizational culture and communication maturity.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made. For organizations:

- Integrate the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms into internal training modules, especially for new hires, team leaders, and managers.
- Use the paradigms as a communication audit framework, helping teams evaluate and improve their internal practices.
- Encourage leaders to embody paradigms such as "Treat the Listener as Your Customer" and "Speak with Data & Facts" to set communication standards.

For communication professionals:

- Customize communication strategies using the paradigms as diagnostic tools, identifying which areas need attention in specific teams or departments.
- Facilitate workshops that explain each paradigm using case studies and role-play scenarios, especially for Paradigms 5 and 7, where understanding may be more abstract or culturally sensitive.

For educators and researchers:

- Incorporate the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms into communication curricula for business and management students across Indonesia and Southeast Asia.
- Extend the study by conducting comparative research across cultures or industries to explore universality versus local specificity.
- Refine the survey instrument further and conduct longitudinal studies to assess the paradigms' impact on actual communication outcomes over time.

This study contributes to global communication theory by validating a framework derived from a non-Western organizational context, thereby challenging the dominance of Euro-American paradigms in communication scholarship. The Seven Smart Communication Paradigms offer a culturally grounded yet theoretically rigorous model that integrates universal principles—such as systems thinking, process-based messaging, and nonverbal communication—with culturally specific practices, such as *sungkan* and collective decision-making.

This localized approach broadens the epistemological base of communication studies and demonstrates how theory can be both globally informed and contextually sensitive. As such, the model offers utility for Indonesian workplaces and global scholars and practitioners seeking culturally attuned frameworks for effective workplace communication.

The Seven Smart Communication Paradigms offer a culturally informed and empirically supported framework for improving workplace communication in Indonesia. Their practical utility and theoretical grounding make them a valuable resource for individual competency development, team collaboration, and strategic organizational growth.

Future efforts should focus on scaling the model, adapting it for digital and hybrid work environments, and embedding it within broader professional learning ecosystems. While the framework shows strong potential, however, several limitations must be acknowledged to guide future studies and practical applications.

As with any empirical study, this research has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the results and applying the findings. While the sample of 116 professionals was sufficient for exploratory analysis and reliability testing, it does not fully reflect the diversity of Indonesia's organizational landscape. The purposive sampling approach—chosen to ensure depth and relevance—limits the extent to which these findings can be generalized across sectors, regions, or demographic groups.

To strengthen external validity, future research should consider larger, more randomized samples, potentially stratified by industry, geography, or organizational size. This would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how the paradigms function across varying workplace cultures and communication environments.

The study relies on self-reported perceptions of communication practices, which can be subject to response bias or social desirability effects. Participants may have overreported positive behaviors or idealized their communication competence, especially when evaluating paradigms framed as "smart" or desirable.

Future research may benefit from triangulating data with qualitative interviews, peer evaluations, or behavioral observations to corroborate self-assessments.

This study measured perceptions of communication paradigms, but it did not track actual behavioral changes or outcomes resulting from their implementation. While validation is an important first step, the next phase should involve testing whether the use of these

paradigms leads to measurable improvements in communication effectiveness, collaboration, or leadership.

Longitudinal or pre/post-intervention designs may offer valuable insight. This becomes especially relevant when considering the role of cultural sensitivity in shaping communication effectiveness—an issue addressed in the following subsection.

Cultural context plays a pivotal role in how communication frameworks are understood and adopted. In Indonesian workplaces—particularly those shaped by hierarchy, age-based deference, and values such as *sungkan*—paradigms that promote openness or directness (e.g., Paradigm 7: Assumptions and Reluctance are Major Barriers) may encounter resistance. This underscores the nuanced challenges of applying standardized communication models within culturally layered professional settings.

As workplace norms evolve toward more agile, transparent, and feedback-driven approaches, these paradigms hold promises for adaptation in digital, hybrid, and multicultural environments. Generational differences, sector-specific expectations, and regional variations may also influence paradigm adoption—suggesting rich opportunities for future research.

In-depth case studies or ethnographic investigations could offer deeper insight into how cultural values shape communication behavior in practice. Such qualitative methods can uncover subtle forms of resistance, adaptation, and innovation that structured surveys may not fully capture.

This study provides a foundational platform for both scholarly inquiry and practical innovation. By engaging with, refining, and adapting these paradigms, communication scholars and professionals can address the dynamic demands of Indonesian—and potentially global—workplaces.

**Acknowledgments**

The author extends sincere gratitude to all the professionals who generously participated in this study, contributing their time, insights, and reflections on workplace communication. Their input was invaluable in grounding the research in real-world practice.

Appreciation is also extended to colleagues and mentors who offered constructive feedback during the conceptual development and refinement of the Seven Smart Communication Paradigms. Special thanks are due to the reviewers of Expose: *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* for their thoughtful suggestions, which significantly enhanced the clarity and scholarly rigor of this manuscript.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on Ginting's earlier work, "*Komunikasi Cerdas: Panduan Komunikasi di Dunia Kerja*" (2015, 2017), which serves as both inspiration and a conceptual starting point.

Institutional support received during the research process is gratefully acknowledged. Any errors or omissions in this work remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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