



From Communication to Culture: How Leadership Communication Shapes Positive Organizational Culture

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ABSTRACT

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Youth and student organizations play an important role in developing leadership, social awareness, teamwork, and organizational responsibility. However, differences in member characteristics, participation, and communication patterns can create challenges in coordination and the development of a positive organizational culture. This study aims to analyze leadership communication strategies in building a positive organizational culture, examine how communication contributes to organizational culture development, and identify factors that support and hinder its implementation. A qualitative descriptive approach with a case study orientation was employed. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving organizational leaders, administrators, members, and other relevant informants. Data were analyzed using data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, with source and technique triangulation used to strengthen data credibility. The findings show that leadership communication is implemented adaptively through direct, group, interpersonal, and digital communication. Open and dialogic communication encourages participation, while interpersonal communication strengthens trust, solidarity, and a family-like organizational culture. Digital media facilitate information dissemination but require complementary direct communication. The findings imply that effective leadership communication should integrate clarity, openness, participation, interpersonal interaction, and adaptive media use to strengthen teamwork, responsibility, discipline, solidarity, and organizational commitment.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth and student organizations have an important societal role because they provide spaces for young people to develop leadership, teamwork, communication, social awareness, and responsibility. These competencies are

essential for preparing adaptive and character-driven human resources who can contribute to communities and society (Driskill & Mirivel, 2025; Hubbart, 2024). Within such organizations, effective communication is particularly important because collective activities require members to exchange information, coordinate responsibilities, and develop shared understanding. Organizational communication therefore functions not only as information transmission but also as a mechanism for coordination, motivation, relationship development, and organizational culture formation (Willett et al., 2026; Kelmendi et al., 2024). When communication is ineffective, organizations may experience coordination problems, interpersonal conflict, and declining participation. Thus, strengthening communication practices in youth organizations is socially important because it supports both organizational effectiveness and the development of young people's social and leadership capacities.

The importance of organizational communication becomes more pronounced as youth organizations operate within increasingly diverse and dynamic social environments (Plaku & Leka, 2025; Paredes-Saavedra et al., 2024). Members may differ in educational backgrounds, experiences, personalities, levels of participation, and expectations, requiring leaders to establish communication that is clear, inclusive, and responsive. Leadership communication is therefore not limited to delivering organizational instructions but also involves building interpersonal relationships, encouraging dialogue, and creating opportunities for members to contribute to organizational processes (Mursid et al., 2026; Roni et al., 2026). Open communication can facilitate feedback and participation, whereas predominantly one-way communication may create information gaps and resistance to organizational policies. Communication also contributes to engagement, belonging, and organizational relationships (Iddrisu, 2025; Willie, 2023). Consequently, understanding how leaders communicate with members is important for creating organizational environments characterized by collaboration, trust, participation, solidarity, and shared responsibility.

Despite the importance of communication, youth and student organizations commonly face problems related to coordination, information dissemination, participation, and interpersonal interaction. Differences in members' commitments and organizational experiences can make it difficult to maintain consistent involvement and shared understanding. Communication problems may become more complex when organizations combine face-to-face interaction with digital platforms such as WhatsApp groups and social media. Although digital media facilitate rapid information distribution, they do not automatically ensure meaningful interaction. Delayed responses, passive participation, fragmented information, and misunderstandings can emerge

when communication is not managed effectively. Such conditions may influence members' willingness to participate, their relationships with other members, and their understanding of organizational responsibilities. The problem is therefore not simply whether information is communicated, but whether leadership communication is sufficiently interactive, persuasive, adaptive, and relational to support organizational cohesion and a constructive culture.

These issues can be observed in the organizational context of the Ikatan Pelajar/Mahasiswa Desa Lambur dan Kota Harapan (IKA MALAKHA) in Jambi Province (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024; Rafi'i et al., 2025). Established by approximately 13 students from different higher education institutions and officially inaugurated on January 31, 2016, at the Lambur Village Office, IKA MALAKHA functions as a platform for developing leadership, solidarity, intellectual development, social awareness, and community responsibility (Furqon et al., 2026; Wahyudin et al., 2023). As a regional-based youth and student organization, it brings together members with different educational backgrounds, organizational experiences, academic commitments, personal characteristics, and levels of involvement (Batool et al., 2024; Pai et al., 2024). These characteristics create distinctive communication dynamics. In organizational activities, challenges may include limited coordination, uneven member participation, ineffective information dissemination, and misunderstandings between leaders and members. The use of digital communication platforms also creates both opportunities and challenges because frequent information exchange does not necessarily produce equivalent levels of interaction, emotional connection, or collective participation.

Previous studies have established that communication is closely related to various dimensions of organizational life, but they have generally examined these dimensions separately. Baran and Davis (2025) associated organizational communication with member participation, while Ndua (2025) emphasized communication effectiveness in supporting coordination and performance. Prastianingsih et al. (2025) examined communication in relation to member engagement and organizational belonging, while Putri and Herman (2024) discussed persuasive and interpersonal leadership communication in relation to member loyalty. Tun'nisa and Chaniago (2026) highlighted interpersonal communication and solidarity, whereas Yakin et al. (2025) connected communicative and participatory leadership with organizational work culture. These studies demonstrate the broad relevance of communication; however, their analytical focus remains fragmented across participation, performance, engagement, loyalty, solidarity, and culture. Consequently, they provide limited explanation of leadership communication as an ongoing process that simultaneously shapes organizational relationships, participation, and cultural development.

The existing literature demonstrates that communication plays an important role in shaping participation, engagement, loyalty, solidarity, coordination, and organizational culture. However, previous studies have generally examined these dimensions separately, resulting in limited understanding of leadership communication as an integrated and continuous process of organizational culture formation. Research has also paid relatively limited attention to regional-based student organizations, where kinship, regional identity, solidarity, and differences in member participation may create distinctive communication dynamics. In addition, the increasing use of digital communication requires organizations to combine interpersonal interaction, group communication, and digital media without weakening social relationships among members. These limitations indicate an important research gap because understanding communication only from the perspective of information delivery or individual outcomes does not fully explain how leaders build shared values, strengthen relationships, encourage participation, and maintain organizational cohesion. Therefore, a more integrated examination of leadership communication strategies is necessary to explain how positive organizational culture is continuously developed within regional-based student organizations.

The state of the art of this study lies in examining leadership communication as a continuous organizational process rather than merely as a communication variable associated with a particular member outcome. The study integrates interpersonal, group, and digital communication to understand how leaders communicate organizational values, coordinate members, encourage participation, manage differences, and cultivate relationships that support a positive organizational culture. This perspective is particularly important in a regional-based student organization where organizational identity is closely connected with kinship, solidarity, collective responsibility, and regional belonging. The research problem concerns how leadership communication strategies are implemented, how they contribute to the development of a positive organizational culture, and what factors support or hinder their implementation within IKA MALAKHA. The underlying argument is that positive organizational culture is more likely to develop when leadership communication is open, participatory, relational, persuasive, adaptive, and supported by appropriate communication media. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze leadership communication strategies in building a positive organizational culture within IKA MALAKHA, Jambi Province.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a case study orientation to obtain an in-depth understanding of leadership communication strategies in building a positive organizational culture. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to explore

communication processes, interactions, experiences, and organizational practices within their natural context rather than measure relationships among variables statistically (Baran & Davis, 2025; Tun'nisa & Chaniago, 2026). The case study orientation was considered appropriate because the research focused on a specific organization and examined its communication practices as an integrated phenomenon within a particular organizational setting. This design enabled the researchers to explore how leaders communicate organizational objectives, coordinate members, encourage participation, manage interpersonal relationships, and cultivate organizational values. The qualitative descriptive orientation also allowed the study to present empirical conditions systematically based on information obtained directly from organizational actors and relevant documentation.

The research was conducted at the Ikatan Pelajar/Mahasiswa Desa Lambur dan Kota Harapan (IKA MALAKHA), Jambi Province. The organization was selected because it represents a regional-based youth and student organization whose members share a common regional background while possessing diverse educational experiences, organizational involvement, and individual characteristics. These characteristics provide a relevant context for examining leadership communication and organizational culture. The organization also utilizes interpersonal, group, and digital communication in coordinating activities and maintaining relationships among members. This setting therefore provides an opportunity to examine how leadership communication operates within an organization characterized by kinship, solidarity, regional identity, and varying levels of member participation. Informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and involvement in organizational activities. They included the chairperson, administrators, active members, and other individuals considered capable of providing relevant information regarding leadership communication, organizational interactions, and cultural practices (Yakin et al., 2025; Meneses-La-Riva et al., 2025).

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine communication practices, interactions between leaders and members, coordination processes, participation, and organizational activities in their natural setting. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain detailed information regarding leaders' communication strategies, members' experiences, communication challenges, and organizational values. This technique provided sufficient flexibility for researchers to explore emerging issues while maintaining focus on the research objectives (Ndua, 2025; Şengüllendi et al., 2024). Documentation was used to complement information obtained through observation and interviews. Relevant organizational documents, activity records, communication materials,

and other available evidence were examined to provide additional contextual information. The data collection process focused on leadership communication strategies, organizational communication patterns, and organizational culture, particularly teamwork, discipline, responsibility, commitment, solidarity, openness, and member participation.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation was conducted by selecting, simplifying, organizing, and focusing the information obtained from observations, interviews, and documents according to the research objectives. The condensed data were then displayed systematically in narrative descriptions and thematic categories to facilitate identification of communication patterns and organizational culture. The researchers subsequently conducted verification by comparing emerging findings across different sources and identifying consistent patterns, relationships, and meanings. Conclusions were continuously reviewed throughout the analysis process to ensure that interpretations were supported by the collected evidence. Data validity was strengthened through source and technique triangulation by comparing information from different informants and data collection methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Interpersonal Communication as a Strengthening Mechanism for a Family-Like Organizational Culture

The findings indicate that interpersonal communication is an important component of organizational interaction at IKA MALAKHA. Relationships among members are not formed solely through formal organizational positions but are also influenced by social closeness and shared regional identity. Member interaction occurs both within formal organizational activities and through informal encounters. Informal interaction provides opportunities for members to exchange information, discuss organizational matters, and develop personal relationships beyond formal responsibilities. These interactions contribute to maintaining social cohesion among members. The findings further indicate that shared regional identity provides an initial basis for closeness, but the continuity of relationships depends on repeated interaction and communication. Thus, the family-like character of the organization is reflected not only in members' shared background but also in their continuing communication experiences.

The findings also show that leaders use personal approaches when dealing with members' individual circumstances. Issues related to academic commitments, limited availability, difficulties in completing responsibilities, and

particular communication problems are not always addressed effectively through group communication. Individual communication provides space for leaders to understand members' conditions more specifically and to adjust their approach according to individual circumstances. This pattern indicates that leadership communication extends beyond the distribution of organizational tasks. Leaders interact with members as individuals with different conditions, capacities, and levels of involvement. Such interaction creates opportunities for members to feel recognized and understood within the organization. The findings therefore demonstrate that interpersonal communication functions as a mechanism for maintaining relationships while simultaneously supporting the management of individual differences within organizational activities.

The findings further indicate that interpersonal communication contributes to the development of closer relationships between leaders and members. Leaders are not positioned only as individuals who provide instructions but also as organizational actors who communicate with members regarding their circumstances and difficulties. This creates a relationship that extends beyond formal structural interaction. The communication process allows organizational direction to be conveyed within a more supportive interpersonal environment. Consequently, leadership communication operates simultaneously at two levels: the structural level, where leaders coordinate organizational activities, and the relational level, where leaders maintain social connections with members. The combination of these two dimensions supports the family-like character of IKA MALAKHA by connecting organizational responsibilities with interpersonal relationships, trust, care, solidarity, and members' sense of belonging.

Digital Media as a Means of Organizational Connectivity

The findings show that digital media have become an integral part of communication practices at IKA MALAKHA. Group communication applications and social media are used to distribute organizational information, provide reminders concerning activities, coordinate members, and maintain communication when face-to-face interaction cannot be conducted. Digital communication is particularly relevant because members have different academic activities and may be located in different places. Through digital platforms, information can be distributed to multiple members within a relatively short period. Messages can also remain available for members to review after their initial distribution. These characteristics make digital communication useful for maintaining organizational connectivity and supporting coordination across differences in members' schedules and locations.

However, the findings also identify limitations in digital communication. The availability of a digital communication channel does not necessarily result in effective communication. Messages may be read late, receive no response, become mixed with other messages, or be interpreted differently by different members. Consequently, the delivery of information and the achievement of shared understanding are not necessarily the same process. A message may reach members without producing the expected response or organizational action. This indicates that communication effectiveness depends not only on whether information is transmitted but also on whether members understand the information and respond according to organizational expectations. The findings therefore position digital communication as a useful mechanism for information distribution but not as a complete substitute for direct interpersonal interaction.

The findings further indicate that different types of information require different communication approaches. Information concerning schedules, reminders, task distribution, and organizational announcements can be communicated efficiently through digital platforms. In contrast, issues involving personal circumstances, complex explanations, interpersonal problems, or potential misunderstandings require more direct communication. The effectiveness of digital communication therefore depends on the ability of leaders to adjust the structure and channel of messages according to the characteristics of the information. Clear messages, explicit objectives, and identifiable response expectations can facilitate organizational communication. When information requires clarification or involves interpersonal sensitivity, direct communication provides a more appropriate space for interaction.

Leadership Communication in the Formation of Organizational Culture

The findings demonstrate that leadership communication is closely connected with the development of organizational values at IKA MALAKHA. The values identified in the organizational context include openness, teamwork, responsibility, solidarity, discipline, and commitment. However, the findings show that communication does not immediately become organizational culture. There is a process through which communicated values are understood, translated into action, practiced repeatedly, and eventually become habitual patterns of behavior. The findings therefore indicate a sequence in which communication provides the initial stimulus, understanding gives meaning to the message, action translates the message into behavior, repetition strengthens the behavior, and habituation creates conditions for the internalization of organizational values.

The development of responsibility illustrates this process. A leader's statement concerning the importance of responsibility does not by itself establish a culture of responsibility. The value becomes observable when members

understand their responsibilities, perform assigned tasks, receive reinforcement or evaluation, and repeatedly demonstrate responsible behavior in organizational activities. The same pattern applies to openness. Statements that members are encouraged to express their opinions do not automatically create an open culture. Openness becomes part of organizational practice when members receive genuine opportunities to express their views and experience those views being considered in organizational processes. Thus, the findings indicate that organizational culture is reflected more strongly in members' repeated experiences and behaviors than in formal statements concerning organizational values.

The findings also show that organizational activities provide an important space for transforming communication into cultural practice. Leadership provides direction, communication conveys and clarifies organizational values, and activities provide opportunities for members to practice those values. Repeated interaction during organizational activities allows members to experience cooperation, responsibility, discipline, solidarity, and commitment in concrete situations. When these experiences are repeated and reinforced, organizational values become increasingly embedded in everyday behavior. Therefore, organizational culture at IKA MALAKHA is formed through continuous interaction rather than through formal organizational rules alone.

Communication as a Mechanism for Coordination and Accountability

The findings indicate that communication plays an important role in connecting organizational planning with implementation. Organizational activities require the distribution of responsibilities among leaders, administrators, and members. Communication occurs before, during, and after activities, with different functions at each stage. Before activities, communication establishes shared understanding concerning objectives, schedules, responsibilities, and task distribution. During implementation, communication enables members and leaders to adjust activities according to actual conditions. After activities, communication supports evaluation by identifying obstacles, reviewing implementation, and determining aspects that require improvement.

The findings reveal a recurring organizational communication cycle consisting of planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and improvement. This cycle demonstrates that communication performs more than a coordination function. It also contributes to organizational accountability. Clear communication makes responsibilities identifiable, while communication concerning task progress allows leaders to recognize obstacles during implementation. Evaluation provides information that can be used to improve

subsequent activities. Communication therefore creates continuity between what the organization plans, what members implement, what leaders monitor, and what the organization learns from its activities.

The findings further demonstrate that communication supports two interconnected organizational functions. First, communication coordinates different individuals toward shared organizational objectives. Second, communication makes responsibilities visible and provides opportunities for monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, effective organizational communication addresses not only what should be done but also who is responsible, how activities should be implemented, what obstacles may emerge, and what aspects require improvement. Member responsibility is therefore connected with continuous communication rather than with instructions alone.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The findings identify several factors that support leadership communication at IKA MALAKHA. These include family-like relationships, shared regional backgrounds, leadership openness, the availability of digital communication media, and organizational activities that provide opportunities for interaction. Shared regional backgrounds provide a common identity among members, while family-like relationships facilitate closer social interaction. Leadership openness creates opportunities for members to communicate their views and circumstances. Digital media support information distribution and coordination, while organizational activities provide direct opportunities for members to interact and practice organizational values.

At the same time, several factors inhibit communication effectiveness. These include differences in members' characteristics, academic commitments, varying levels of organizational involvement, delayed responses through digital communication, and differences in message interpretation. These factors demonstrate that communication challenges do not originate from a single source. Some obstacles are related to individual members, some emerge from the communication process itself, and others are associated with organizational mechanisms.

The findings allow these inhibiting factors to be organized into three levels. The first is the individual level, which includes academic commitments, personal characteristics, organizational experience, and member responsiveness. The second is the communication level, which includes unclear messages, delayed responses, and differences in interpretation. The third is the organizational level, which includes task distribution, coordination mechanisms, information delivery procedures, and decision-making processes. These three levels demonstrate that communication problems require differentiated

responses. Individual constraints require an understanding of members' circumstances, communication problems require improvements in message structure and delivery, while organizational problems require adjustments to coordination and decision-making mechanisms.

Leadership Communication Strategy Model

The overall findings indicate that leadership communication at IKA MALAKHA operates through a gradual process connecting leadership direction with organizational culture. The process begins with leaders providing clear direction. The direction is communicated through communication channels selected according to the situation. Members are subsequently provided opportunities to respond, ask questions, and seek clarification. The communication process produces shared understanding, which becomes a basis for member participation. Participation then supports coordination and teamwork. Through repeated collaboration, members experience organizational values such as responsibility, discipline, solidarity, and commitment. Continued practice and reinforcement allow these values to become increasingly internalized as organizational habits.

The findings identify five prominent characteristics of the leadership communication strategy. The first is clarity, reflected in the effort to ensure that organizational information, tasks, objectives, and expectations are understood. The second is openness, reflected in opportunities for members to respond and express opinions. The third is interpersonal orientation, reflected in the use of personal communication to understand members' circumstances and maintain relationships. The fourth is participation, reflected in opportunities for members to become involved in communication, coordination, and organizational processes. The fifth is adaptability, reflected in the use of direct, group, interpersonal, and digital communication according to the characteristics of the communication situation.

The findings therefore show that leadership communication at IKA MALAKHA can be represented as a process of clear direction, open and dialogic communication, shared understanding, member participation, coordination and teamwork, practice of organizational values, habituation and internalization, and positive organizational culture. The process demonstrates that organizational culture emerges through repeated communication and interaction within organizational activities. The central finding is that leadership communication connects organizational direction with member participation, interpersonal relationships, coordination, and value formation. The development of a positive organizational culture consequently occurs through repeated communication experiences that are translated into collective behavior and organizational habits.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that interpersonal communication plays a central role in sustaining the family-like organizational culture of IKA MALAKHA. This finding is consistent with Tun'nisa and Chaniago (2026), who emphasize that open and supportive interpersonal communication contributes to harmonious organizational relationships, and with (Alkhodary, 2023; Murire, 2024), who highlight transparency, openness, trust, and collaboration. However, the present findings extend these perspectives by showing that interpersonal communication operates not only as a relationship-building mechanism but also as a bridge between formal leadership authority and the organization's family-like social character. Shared regional identity provides an initial basis for social connection, but repeated communication transforms this identity into sustained solidarity and belonging. Theoretically, this finding reinforces the view that organizational culture develops through continuing interaction. Practically, leaders can strengthen organizational cohesion by combining task-oriented communication with personal approaches that recognize members' individual circumstances and needs.

The findings concerning digital communication both confirm and qualify previous research. Huang et al. (2026) argue that leadership in digital environments requires communication strategies adapted to the characteristics of communication media, while Abbas et al. (2024) show that digital transformation influences organizational communication patterns and culture. Consistent with these studies, the findings indicate that digital platforms improve information distribution, coordination, and organizational connectivity. Nevertheless, the present study identifies an important limitation: message delivery does not necessarily produce shared understanding. Delayed responses, information overload, and differences in interpretation may reduce communication effectiveness. This finding suggests a theoretical distinction between communication transmission and communication meaning-making. Practically, leaders should select communication channels according to message characteristics, using digital media for routine coordination while employing direct interaction for complex, sensitive, or potentially ambiguous issues. This adaptive approach can preserve efficiency without weakening interpersonal relationships.

The findings also show that communication contributes to organizational culture through a process of understanding, action, repetition, habituation, and internalization. This is consistent with Rožman et al. (2023), who associates organizational culture with values, norms, beliefs, and practices, and with Yakin et al. (2025), who emphasize leadership, interaction, habituation, and value

internalization in cultural transformation. The present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that leadership communication is an initiating mechanism rather than an automatic determinant of culture. Organizational values such as responsibility and openness become cultural characteristics only when members repeatedly experience and practice them in organizational activities. Theoretically, this provides a process-oriented explanation of how communication becomes culture. Practically, organizational leaders should not rely solely on verbal statements about desired values. They need to create repeated opportunities for members to practice responsibility, express opinions, cooperate, and receive reinforcement through organizational activities.

The findings further indicate that communication simultaneously performs coordination and accountability functions. Communication occurs before, during, and after organizational activities, connecting planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and improvement. This finding is compatible with Ndua, (2025), who demonstrate that democratic-participative leadership can support discipline when direction is accompanied by member involvement. However, the present study extends this perspective by positioning communication as the mechanism that connects participation with accountability. Clear communication makes responsibilities identifiable, progress observable, and evaluation possible. The theoretical implication is that leadership communication should be understood not only as an interpersonal or informational process but also as an organizational control and learning mechanism (Florea & Croitoru, 2025; Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024). The practical implication is that leaders should establish communication routines for task clarification, progress reporting, problem identification, and post-activity evaluation. Such practices can strengthen responsibility while maintaining member participation and reducing coordination gaps.

The supporting and inhibiting factors identified in this study further demonstrate that communication effectiveness depends on organizational context. Family-like relationships, shared regional identity, leadership openness, digital media, and opportunities for interaction support communication, whereas academic commitments, different levels of participation, delayed responses, unclear messages, and differences in interpretation may inhibit it. This finding is consistent with Tun'nisa and Chaniago (2026), who emphasize open, dialogic, and supportive communication, but it adds a contextual dimension by showing that communication barriers emerge at individual, communication, and organizational levels. The theoretical implication is that leadership communication cannot be treated as a universal strategy independent of context. Practically, leaders need to diagnose the source of communication barriers before selecting interventions. Individual constraints may require personal approaches, communication problems may require clearer messages, and organizational problems may require improved coordination mechanisms and

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that leadership communication at IKA MALAKHA operates as an adaptive and relational process through direct, group, interpersonal, and digital communication, with the key lesson that positive organizational culture is developed not simply through the delivery of information but through continuous communication, shared understanding, participation, collective action, habituation, and value internalization. The study's scholarly contribution lies in integrating interpersonal, participatory, and digital communication perspectives to explain how leadership communication contributes to the formation of openness, teamwork, responsibility, discipline, solidarity, and commitment within a regional-based student organization. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single organization and its qualitative contextual approach, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other organizational settings. Future research could examine multiple student organizations, compare different organizational contexts, or employ mixed-method and longitudinal designs to examine changes in communication practices and organizational culture over time. Practically, the findings imply that organizational leaders should combine clear and open communication with interpersonal approaches, appropriate digital media, member participation, and continuous evaluation to strengthen organizational cohesion, accountability, and a positive organizational culture.

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