

Interpersonal Communication of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Students' Learning Ability

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ABSTRACT

Effective interpersonal communication by teachers supports learning through empathetic, argumentative, and ethical verbal and nonverbal approaches, building students' motivation, trust, and engagement in an inclusive learning environment. This study aims to understand the interpersonal communication of Islamic Religious Education teachers in establishing positive relationships to support students' academic success. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to explore interpersonal communication between Islamic Education teachers and students through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana method, which includes data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, member checking, and peer discussions. The results indicate that teachers' interpersonal communication strategies involve a harmonious blend of verbal and nonverbal communication. Teachers deliver material through lectures, advice, and praise, while reinforcing messages with facial expressions and gestures. Values such as empathy, openness, support, positive attitudes, and equality form the foundation for building strong emotional connections with students. Supporting factors such as extended learning time and school programs also strengthen communication. Despite challenges like large class sizes and negative student perceptions, adaptive and empathetic strategies successfully create a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere. Conclusion: The interpersonal communication strategies of teachers enhance learning through verbal and nonverbal approaches that foster closeness, participation, and a positive atmosphere.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a conscious process involving the delivery of meaningful messages through verbal language to achieve specific goals in human social interactions (Afifah & Utami, 2024; Anjerini, 2023; Simorangkir, 2019). Communication is crucial in building relationships, cooperation, and a conducive atmosphere in various contexts, including education, through continuous verbal and nonverbal interactions (Mahadi, 2021; Sulisni, 2023; Hari, 2018). Interpersonal communication allows the direct exchange of messages with emotional responses and quick feedback, making it effective in building an educational relationship between teachers and students (Diyanti & Awalya, 2022; Apriani, 2021; Fakhriyah & Pratiwi, 2021).

The pandemic changed interpersonal communication with the increase of telework relying on digital devices, causing isolation and depersonalization of professional relationships despite reduced conflicts (Dupré, 2024). Education has adapted communication materials to face the decline of face-to-face interaction and the rise of technology use (Tolman, 2022). In the health sector, videoconference consultations have increased, making online communication training important (Kyyhkynen et al., 2023). The Industrial Revolution 4.0 drives global digital connectivity and shared digital language (De Andrade Régio et al., 2017). Electronic feedback systems improve diagnoses, while social limitations remain challenges in communication contexts (Kotwal et al., 2024; Parkes et al., 2021; Walther & Valkenburg, 2017).

Islam emphasizes ethical and polite communication through terms in the Qur'an such as *qaulan sadīdan* and *qaulan layyinan* as guidelines for good speech (Asad, 2020). For example, in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

The dialogue of Prophet Ibrahim highlights the importance of logical and firm argumentative communication in conveying truth, silencing the arrogant opponent (Kemenag RI, 2022). Ibrahim's story teaches wise argumentative communication, which is important in education so that teachers can manage students with empathy, firmness, and support the learning process (Meinda & Munanjar, 2023). Effective teacher-student communication that encompasses emotional and social aspects encourages openness, motivation, and academic achievement in an inclusive and comfortable learning environment (Sartika et al., 2023; Mailani et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2024; Rahmadania et al., 2024). Open and caring interpersonal communication between teachers and students supports adolescent learning motivation through persuasive verbal and nonverbal approaches, building trust and student enthusiasm (Laksono et al., 2024; Aziz, 2019).

During the transition phase of junior high school adolescents, persuasive and empathetic interpersonal communication from teachers increases motivation, engagement, and students' self-confidence in the learning process (Sidik & Sobandi, 2018; Septihadi et al., 2024; Zulia et al., 2023). Teachers' nonverbal communication influences interpersonal communication and students' emotional states (Sulung & Muspawi, 2024; Ayagan et al., 2024). Interpersonal communication between teachers and students creates an effective learning environment. Positive interpersonal behaviors such as teacher attention and clear instructions increase student motivation (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021), while sharing personal experiences by teachers strengthens relationships (Cayanus & Martin, 2016). Good verbal communication skills and

constructive feedback support student engagement and achievement (Mukhlis et al., 2024). Students' Internal motivation must also be stimulated through effective psychological communication (Yao, 2023). Communication training, cultural sensitivity, and further research on teacher-student interaction are highly recommended (Gisewhite et al., 2021; Sekhar, 2024; Pennings & Hollenstein, 2020).

This study aims to understand and develop teachers' interpersonal communication skills to build positive relationships with students, thereby supporting their academic and emotional success. This research aims to help teachers adjust communication styles according to student characteristics and learning contexts to make the learning process interactive and meaningful. The expected impact of this research is to provide practical contributions for educators in creating a productive, harmonious, and effective learning environment. Effective interpersonal communication will improve teacher-student relationships, strengthening learning motivation and enhancing overall educational quality.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to provide an in-depth description of interpersonal communication between Islamic Religious Education teachers and students at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Padangsidempuan City. The case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the characteristics, patterns, and dynamics of social interactions contextually and holistically (Abubakar, 2021). The research location was Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, with the primary informants consisting of three Islamic Religious Education teachers purposively selected due to their direct involvement in students' cognitive learning and character development. Additional informants included one principal and five students for source triangulation to strengthen the data.

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher conducted observations in the classroom without intervention to observe Islamic Religious Education teachers' verbal and nonverbal communication patterns with students in a real context. This aimed to capture spontaneous behavior and the context of interaction that interviews might not reveal. Interviews were semi-structured with the three teachers as primary informants, complemented by interviews with the principal and five students to enrich the data. The interview process was recorded and transcribed to maintain information accuracy. Additionally, documentation in the form of photos of teaching activities, audio recordings, and field notes was used to reinforce and validate findings from observations and interviews and provide a visual depiction of the classroom situation.

Data processing followed the approach by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by sorting information according to themes such as communication patterns, obstacles, and impact on students. Next, the data were presented as descriptive narratives, thematic tables, and direct quotes from informants. Conclusions were drawn gradually and verified to ensure accuracy. To guarantee data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation, member checking with informants, and peer discussions to minimize bias.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Interpersonal Communication Strategies of Islamic Education Teachers in Improving Learning at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School

Interpersonal communication in the context of education plays a central role in forming effective relationships between teachers and students. The basic understanding of ‘interpersonal’ emphasizes direct involvement between individuals, allowing for a deep exchange of meaning. Face-to-face interpersonal communication enables personal contact that greatly influences changes in attitudes and behaviors (Rahmat Jalaluddin in Fathurrohman, 2018; Sareong & Supartini, 2020). In the learning practice at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Islamic Education teachers apply interpersonal communication in the following ways:

a. Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the primary means teachers deliver lesson material and build two-way dialogue with students. At Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, forms of verbal communication commonly used by Islamic Religious Education teachers include lectures, giving advice, open-ended questions, and verbal motivation. This approach aims to convey learning content and encourages active participation from students. Effective verbal communication creates an interactive learning atmosphere where students are not only listeners but also actively express opinions and ask questions. Additionally, teachers reinforce through verbal praise such as “good,” “great,” or “well done,” which functions as motivation. Communicative and relevant language helps the message be more easily understood and accepted by the communicants (Devito, 2018).

b. Nonverbal Communication

Islamic Religious Education teachers at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School do not rely solely on verbal communication but also utilize nonverbal communication to strengthen the conveyed message and maintain classroom control. Nonverbal cues such as eye contact, hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements effectively convey emotions and specific attitudes. For example, a sharp gaze or a head shake from the teacher when students behave disorderly can serve as a firm signal even without words. Mehrabian nonverbal communication contributes significantly to conveying meaning and can even be stronger than verbal communication (Pratiwi, 2021).

c. Building Emotional and Personal Relationships with Students

This approach emphasizes the importance of fostering closeness to create trust and comfort, so students are more responsive, active, and able to absorb learning material easily. Nonverbal communication not only complements verbal communication but also reflects the teacher’s empathy and care towards students. This can be shown through facial expressions such as smiling or simple actions like a light touch on the shoulder, which act as emotional support for students experiencing anxiety. A harmonious integration of verbal and nonverbal communication enables a conducive, positive, and productive learning atmosphere. Therefore, teachers are required to be highly sensitive in observing and responding to students’ body language to ensure the effectiveness of

the communication process. In this context, interpersonal communication is an interaction process between at least two individuals aiming to convey messages and information directly. The academic year demands that teachers adjust their habits in building and maintaining relationships with students, emphasizing the importance of emotional closeness and emotional intelligence that affect the quality of these relationships (Newberry & Hinchcliff, 2024; Chen et al., 2025; Poulou, 2017).

2. Interpersonal Communication of Islamic Education Teachers in the Learning Process

The effectiveness of learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's ability to integrate verbal and non-verbal communication harmoniously. At Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, teachers have demonstrated that a comprehensive communication approach can enhance students' enthusiasm and learning motivation. This approach reflects the teacher's ability to visually and emotionally recognize students' needs. The use of clear verbal language, combined with appropriate non-verbal expressions, helps students understand the material comprehensively. Moreover, this strategy also strengthens the emotional bond between teacher and student, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. In the educational context, effective communication does not merely convey information but also builds shared meaning through interpersonal interaction (Saleh, 2018). Teachers who can effectively combine verbal and non-verbal communication are better positioned to guide students toward optimal academic achievement. Joseph Devito defines interpersonal communication as sending and receiving messages between two individuals or small groups, occurring directly and accompanied by feedback (Aziz, 2017; Zulkifli, 2019). Interpersonal communication by Islamic Education teachers in the learning process is carried out as follows:

a. Openness

Interpersonal communication occurs intensively between teachers and students to support the effectiveness of the learning process. This interaction's high level of openness allows for effective two-way communication, making students feel valued and acknowledged. Openness is also a crucial foundation in building healthy interpersonal communication, as it enables teachers to understand students' needs more deeply and adjust teaching methods accordingly. Thus, openness significantly contributes to improving the quality of learning (Nilasari, 2020). The openness observed at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School strengthens the emotional bond between teachers and students, thereby increasing students' motivation to learn.

b. Empathy

Empathy is also essential to interpersonal communication at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School. Empathy refers to understanding and feeling what others are experiencing, including responding to their feelings and perspectives (Alfiyanto et al., 2021). This shows that teachers are attentive to academic aspects and students' emotional conditions, which greatly influence their ability to learn. Rogers explains that empathy in interpersonal communication creates warmer relationships and fosters trust (Nurasiah & Zulkhairi, 2021). In practice, teachers pay special attention to students experiencing personal problems so that they feel supported and comfortable. Islamic Education teachers who show empathy can foster positive social bonds in the

classroom, creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Empathy is a communication bridge that helps students feel accepted and motivated to overcome learning obstacles.

c. Supportiveness

Supportiveness also plays a significant role in interpersonal communication at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School. This mutual support creates a safe communication climate and encourages openness in interactions between Islamic Religious Education teachers and students. Devito explains that this approach aligns with practical communication theory, which states that emotional support fosters active participation and self-confidence (Ritonga, 2020). When students feel supported, they are more motivated to learn and engage in the learning process. Communication based on support also reduces tension and conflict in the classroom, creating a more conducive atmosphere. Islamic Education teachers use constructive language and offer rewards as favorable reinforcement. Thus, supportiveness becomes an essential strategy for enhancing healthy and productive interpersonal relationships in the school environment.

d. Positive Attitude

A positive attitude is also an essential part of the interpersonal communication of Islamic Religious Education teachers at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School. This attitude is reflected in behaviors and ways of thinking that support communication goals so that messages can be well received (Kartini et al., 2020). A positive attitude helps create a pleasant learning atmosphere and reduces stress for both teachers and students. Positive communication can enhance interaction effectiveness and strengthen emotional bonds. The positive energy shown by teachers serves as an example for students to behave positively (Meinda & Munanjar, 2023). It also helps minimize potential interpersonal conflicts during the learning process. With a positive attitude, teachers can build an environment that supports students' cognitive and emotional development optimally.

e. Equality

Equality in interpersonal communication is reflected in the interaction patterns between teachers and students at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School. This concept means that each individual involved in communication is recognized as having equal value and deserves mutual respect (Afifah & Utami, 2024). For instance, students who tend to be more formal receive a more serious teaching approach, while more active and playful students are engaged through educational games. This approach reflects the teachers' awareness of accommodating students' needs and learning styles fairly and proportionately. Equality in interpersonal communication enhances respect and engagement (Anjerini, 2023). Thus, teachers succeed in creating an inclusive learning atmosphere that appreciates individual differences. Such equality is crucial for building trust and eliminating feelings of inferiority among students.

The interpersonal communication strategies of teachers at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School also emphasize the importance of building closeness with students to ensure effective learning. This approach aligns with the concept of continuous communication, which is essential for developing strong interpersonal relationships (Mahadi, 2021; Simorangkir, 2019). Additionally, teachers use examples relevant to students' daily lives, making the subject matter more straightforward to understand. This

aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the relevance of students' experiences in learning (Mahadi, 2021). Through intensive and ongoing communication, teachers can better understand students' reactions and needs. Group management is also carried out with consideration of students' abilities to enhance participation and collaboration. This strategy shows that teachers' interpersonal communication is adaptive and responsive to classroom dynamics.

The interpersonal communication of Islamic Religious Education teachers at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School reflects various essential aspects that support effective teaching and learning processes. Openness, empathy, supportiveness, a positive attitude, and equality are the main pillars that build good relationships between teachers and students. Through interviews and observations, it was found that teachers actively use communication strategies that focus on closeness and individual student understanding. This research aligns with previous findings stating that effective interpersonal communication can improve students' learning motivation and achievement (Diyanti & Awalya, 2022; Hari, 2018; Sulisni, 2023). Teachers who manage interpersonal communication well can create an inclusive, supportive, and conducive learning environment for students' holistic development. Therefore, developing interpersonal communication skills for teachers is crucial to supporting educational success in schools. This study provides a concrete picture of how interpersonal communication in schools can serve as a foundation for enhancing overall education quality.

3. Supporting Factors of Interpersonal Communication of Islamic Education Teachers in Learning

Ropiani explains that the effectiveness of interpersonal communication is influenced by various factors that can either support or hinder the interaction process (Meinda & Munanjar, 2023). These factors include:

a. Sufficiently Long Learning Time

At Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School Padangsidempuan, several key factors have been proven to support establishing interpersonal communication between teachers and students within the learning context. These factors include time, the level of trust, and the presence of school programs systematically designed to facilitate positive interpersonal relationships. One significant supporting factor in this school is the relatively long duration of learning time. The teaching and learning process occurs from morning until late afternoon, allowing for more intensive interactions between teachers and students, formally and informally. This condition allows teachers to understand students' dynamics better and apply more personalized communication approaches. Effective communication requires intensity and continuity; the more frequent the communication, the greater the opportunity to build strong interpersonal relationships. With sufficient time allocation, teachers also have more opportunities to build trust and encourage students to openly share their problems (Mailani, 2022).

b. Teachers' Trust in Students

The ability of teachers to place trust in their students is a crucial factor contributing to the development of healthy interpersonal communication. When students are given the space to express their opinions and feel trusted, they tend to be more open

in sharing their feelings and problems. This condition shows that trust encourages openness and plays a role in reducing communication barriers such as fear or low self-esteem. In addition, trust creates a sense of security in interactions an essential aspect during adolescence, especially at the junior high school level. Through a trust-based approach, interpersonal communication is not limited to the delivery of academic material but also includes the emotional and psychological support that students need (Rahmadania et al., 2024).

c. School Programs

School programs aimed at developing interpersonal communication also significantly create a positive communication environment between teachers and students. Activities such as *Bina Pribadi Islam* (Islamic Character Building), which emphasize group discussions, as well as programs like *Malam Bina Iman dan Taqwa* (Faith and Devotion Night), outbound activities, and outdoor learning, provide more flexible and relaxed interaction spaces. Through these programs, the closeness between teachers and students can be enhanced while also expanding the context of communication from purely academic to social and spiritual. These activities offer opportunities for both parties to understand each other's character better, thereby making message delivery and reception in the teaching and learning process more effective. Shared experiences outside of routine classroom activities help strengthen emotional connections between individuals (Hasibuan, 2024).

4. Inhibiting Factors of Interpersonal Communication of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Learning

Several factors have been identified as obstacles in the interpersonal communication process at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School Padangsidempuan. These include:

a. Relatively Large Number of Students

One of the main barriers is the large number of students per class around 30 students which makes it challenging for teachers to build deep, personal communication with each individual. This becomes more complex when there are students with low self-confidence who are hesitant to express their opinions, leading to unbalanced classroom interaction that is often dominated by more active students. A large number of communicants can reduce the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, especially if not accompanied by varied and adaptive communication strategies. To address this challenge, teachers need to give special attention to passive students and create small discussion forums that allow for more intimate and meaningful interactions (Aziz, 2019; Sidik & Sobandi, 2018).

b. Type of Subject Matter

One-way communication is another challenge in the learning process, particularly in subjects like Mathematics. In seventh grade, some students were found to lack basic arithmetic skills that should have been mastered in elementary school. When teachers introduce new concepts, this lack of foundational knowledge makes it difficult for students to grasp the material, resulting in passive communication where students merely listen without being able to provide meaningful responses. This situation reflects ineffective communication caused by instructional methods that are not aligned with

students' needs and abilities. One-way communication tends to reduce student participation and can lead to boredom during learning. Therefore, more flexible and interactive communication methods are needed to ensure effective message delivery and to encourage optimal two-way interaction (Zulia, 2023).

c. Negative Student Perceptions

Students' negative preconceptions about specific subjects are a significant barrier to interpersonal communication in learning. Students who are already disinterested or have had negative experiences with a subject tend to exhibit closed attitudes and low motivation during lessons. This attitude indirectly impedes communication between teacher and student, as students become reluctant to actively participate in classroom interactions. Emphasizes the importance of understanding student character and identifying the sources of these prejudices as a first step for teachers to adjust their communication approaches. In this case, teachers can adopt more varied learning methods, such as game-based learning or case studies, to attract students' attention. These diverse approaches allow students to view the subject from a more enjoyable and relevant perspective, helping to reduce negative perceptions and foster more effective communication (Ayagan, 2024).

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication in school environments like Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Padangsidempuan, is strongly influenced by the synergy between the teacher's role, school programs, and students' characteristics. Teachers with credibility, openness, and high adaptability are generally more successful in establishing healthy communication even amid challenges such as large class sizes or diverse student backgrounds. On the other hand, obstacles such as one-way communication, lack of active participation, and negative subject perceptions can be minimized through the implementation of innovative, empathy-based communication strategies. Effective interpersonal communication is characterized by deep, two-way interactions that mutually influence each other in positive ways. Therefore, it is essential for schools to continuously develop interpersonal communication training for teachers and cultivate a school culture that supports values of openness and empathy. With this approach, the school not only functions as a place for knowledge transfer but also contributes to shaping students who are communicative, confident, and adaptable to social dynamics (Devito, 2018).

D. CONCLUSION

The interpersonal communication strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers at Darul Hasan Integrated Islamic Junior High School play a crucial role in enhancing learning effectiveness. This approach integrates verbal communication such as lectures, advice, and praise with nonverbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions, and body gestures. The combination of these elements helps convey messages clearly and strengthens student engagement in the learning process. Teachers also establish emotional connections with students through openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive attitude, and equality, thereby creating a learning environment that is comfortable, inclusive, and conducive. This strategy encourages active participation and enhances students' confidence and motivation. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is further supported by factors such



as sufficiently long learning time, the trust teachers place in students, and various school programs that facilitate positive interactions outside the classroom. However, challenges still exist, such as large class sizes, subjects that tend to be delivered in a one-way manner, and students' negative perceptions toward certain subjects. Therefore, teachers need to develop adaptive and empathetic communication styles. With the right strategy, interpersonal communication can build strong relationships and support students' academic achievement as well as character development in a holistic manner

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Author 1 : Designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted and revised the initial manuscript.
- Author 2 : Developed the theoretical framework, conducted the literature review, assisted in interpreting the results, and refined the final manuscript.

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