

Interpersonal Communication Of Madrasah Aliyah Teachers In Overcoming Students' Anxiety In Facing University Entrance Selection

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' interpersonal communication plays an important role in guiding madrasah students to face the pressure of college selection by reducing anxiety through constructive, ethical, supportive, and emotional interactions. This research aims to formulate a systematic and contextual approach to understand the role of teachers' interpersonal communication in overcoming the anxiety of madrasah students facing college selection. This study uses a qualitative approach of case studies with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, documentation, purposive selection of informants, data analysis, data condensation, categorization, theme drawing, and validation through triangulation and member check. The results showed that teachers used linear, interactive, and transactional communication models as well as verbal, nonverbal, and Islamic communication value strategies to help students manage anxiety in facing public university selection. There are collaborative efforts, such as communication with parents, self-motivation, and information searching, as well as obstacles in the form of bad moods and incompatibility of academic choices with students' abilities. Conclusions: transactional communication, verbal-nonverbal strategies, Islamic principles, and religious practices effectively manage students' anxiety through dynamic dialogue, collaborative approaches, and personalized communication in an Islamic educational environment.

Keywords:

Communication, Interpersonal, Anxiety, Public Universities

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A. INTRODUCTION

University selection is a crucial decision for students, as it determines the direction of their academic and career paths. Key factors influencing this decision include academic quality and institutional reputation, with university accreditation and rankings



serving as significant indicators (Puiu et al., 2021; Zuniga-Jara et al., 2019). Economic considerations, such as tuition fees, availability of scholarships, and return on investment through post-graduation employment opportunities, also play a major role (Kumar & Tanwar, 2022; Hai et al., 2023). An inclusive campus environment and facilities that support a comfortable learning experience further affect student satisfaction (Kam et al., 2024; Annett et al., 2024). Geographical location, personal preferences, as well as career and entrepreneurial prospects after graduation are additional important factors (Chen et al., 2021; Simarmata et al., 2024; de Vries et al., 2024; Chen, 2024; Nie, 2024; Zhou, 2020).

Student anxiety in choosing a university is influenced by personal, academic, social, and emotional factors. University reputation, quality of education, facilities, and enrollment flexibility are among the main considerations (Wut et al., 2022; Budiono & Suntana, 2018). Strong social support can reduce anxiety and enhance students' self-confidence (Feng & Zhang, 2025). Anxiety can negatively affect health, academic performance, and social well-being, particularly among female students (Timofeev et al., 2023). Academic stress, financial pressure, and family support are major triggers of anxiety that can even lead to school dropout (Otieno, 2024). In addition, anxiety related to career decision-making needs to be managed through emotional intelligence (Ran et al., 2022). Coping strategies include psychological counseling services and proactive programs to help students manage anxiety (Alkandari, 2017; Lisnyj et al., 2020).

Students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan face high academic pressure in preparing for national university entrance exams, such as the *Ujian Masuk Perguruan Tinggi Negeri* (State University Entrance Exam). This pressure stems from the highly competitive nature of the selection process, which evaluates various aspects, including academic achievement and the ability to complete technology-based tests. Beyond academic demands, students also experience anxiety influenced by emotional factors such as fear of failure, low self-confidence, and pressure from parents and the school environment. These factors affect students' mental readiness and academic performance.

Teachers play a crucial role in assisting students with college selection through the communication of information, academic guidance, positive leadership, and collaboration, all of which contribute to students' readiness, motivation, and self-confidence (van Rooij & Jansen, 2018; Torres & Cáceres, 2016; Ravdansuren et al., 2025). Teacher communication involves not only verbal and non-verbal message delivery but also the shaping of students' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in madrasahs where Islamic communication principles such as *qaulan sadidah* (truthful speech), *qaulan karimah* (noble speech), and *qaulan baligha* (effective and impactful speech) serve as ethical foundations for interaction (Muslimin, 2022; Kemenag RI, 2019; Nurhanifah, 2023). Interpersonal communication that is personal, supportive, and warm enhances students' learning motivation, discipline, and religious closeness, and is further influenced by parental support and teachers' communication style (Ramadhani & Faridah, 2025; Jannah et al., 2024).

Interpersonal communication between madrasah teachers and students forms the foundation for mutual understanding and trust (Hongtao, 2020; Houser, 2019). Effective communication also meets students' psychological needs and supports their holistic development and motivation (Yao, 2023; den Brok et al., 2023). A warm and supportive teacher-student relationship contributes to positive cognitive and affective learning outcomes

(Kolak, 2017). Therefore, teachers must develop professional communication skills, such as accepting students' personalities, building trust, and offering support (Sunnatova, 2020). However, the lack of communication training remains a serious challenge that impedes the quality of teacher-student interactions (Gisewhite et al., 2021).

Interpersonal communication between teachers and students plays an essential role in students' college decision-making process. Positive communicative behaviors such as teacher care, clarity, credibility, and approachability have been shown to increase students' motivation, engagement, and academic success, thereby aiding their educational decision-making (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Effective communication also fosters the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability (Farah & Al-Hattami, 2023). Positive teacher-student interactions encourage a sense of belonging to the educational institution (Rivera Munoz et al., 2020). Nevertheless, challenges such as limitations in non-verbal communication and cultural barriers must be addressed (Govindaraju & Taibi, 2025; Chan & Smith, 2024). Strategies like teacher openness and the use of models such as Task-Peer-Communication-Feedback can enhance student participation and understanding in the college selection process (Cayanus & Martin, 2016; Zhan et al., 2024).

Based on these gaps, this study aims to formulate a more systematic and contextual approach to understanding the role of teachers' interpersonal communication in addressing student anxiety within madrasah settings. This research identifies the interpersonal communication models employed by teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan to address student anxiety in facing national university entrance exams. It evaluates the strategies used by teachers to support students in managing anxiety. Consequently, this study is expected to enrich communication methods in Islamic education and support the development of psychological mentoring strategies for students amid complex academic pressures.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand interpersonal communication between teachers and students in dealing with anxiety before university entrance selection. The research location at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan was chosen because it is relevant to the situation of students experiencing psychological and academic pressure. The study focuses on natural interaction in the school's social context. Informants were selected purposively, namely, teachers who are actively involved in student guidance, both academically and psychologically, in order to obtain in-depth and contextual data regarding the phenomenon being studied. Data collection is explained in the following table:

Table 1. Data Collection Techniques

No.	Research Focus	Data Collection Techniques	Data Sources	Data Generated
1	Student and parental anxiety	Interview, Observation	Final year students, parents	Exploring forms and causes of academic anxiety and its symptoms at school
2	Teachers' interpersonal communication model	Interview, Observation	Academic mentors, homeroom teachers	Identifying communication patterns used by teachers in guiding students
3	Interpersonal	Interview,	Academic mentors,	Identifying teachers'



	communication strategies	Documentation	guidance counselors	communication strategies in overcoming student anxiety
4	Efforts and obstacles in interpersonal communication	Interview, Documentation	Teachers, school counselors	Identifying teacher efforts and obstacles faced in the communication process

Data analysis in this study is carried out through three main stages: data condensation involves the process of filtering and summarizing raw data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Irrelevant information is eliminated, while important data are systematically recorded to facilitate analysis. Next, data with similar meanings or patterns are classified into meaning categories based on the same context of interpersonal communication. From these categories, the researcher compiles the main themes that reflect teacher communication patterns, student responses to communication, obstacles faced, and teacher strategies in dealing with student anxiety. To maintain data validity, the researcher uses two main techniques: triangulation of techniques and sources, namely comparing data from various methods and informants, and member check, which is confirming temporary findings with informants to ensure the researcher's interpretation matches the reality in the field, so that the research results are more accurate and reliable. The research problems in this study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the forms of anxiety experienced by students and parents in facing university entrance selection?
2. What interpersonal communication model is applied by teachers in assisting students facing academic anxiety?
3. What interpersonal communication strategies are used by teachers to build effective relationships with students in the context of academic and psychological guidance?
4. What efforts are made by teachers and what obstacles are faced in carrying out interpersonal communication with students?

Based on these research questions, the conceptual framework can be described as follows:

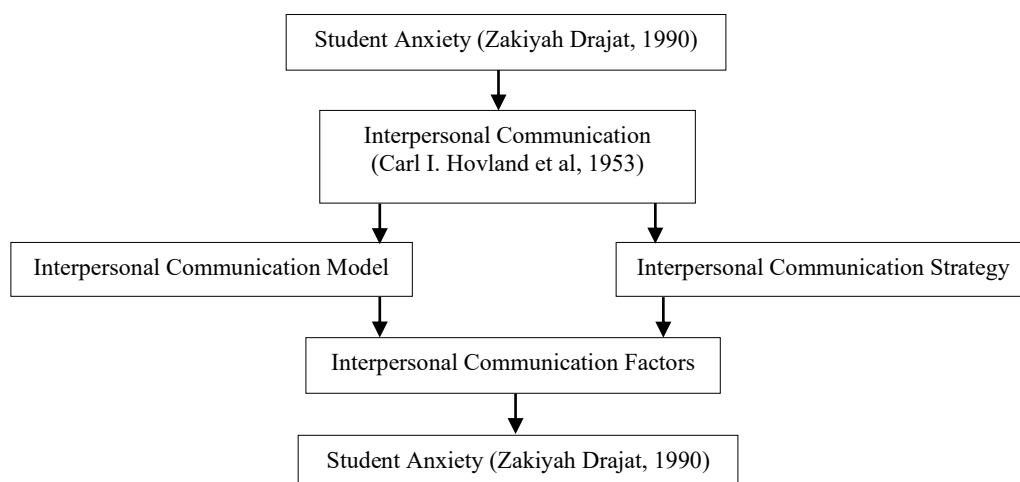


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Student Anxiety at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan

Students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan experience significant anxiety ahead of the state university entrance selection. This anxiety arises due to

differences of opinion between students and their parents regarding the appropriate choice of university. To address this issue, students decide to choose three different majors in the National Selection Based on Tests, which includes choices from both the students themselves and their parents. Besides students, parents also experience anxiety related to the suitability of the chosen major for their children and their ability to finance higher education later. This reflects the pressure felt by both parties. Academic anxiety is an important issue that significantly impacts students' academic performance. Research shows that test anxiety directly lowers academic achievement (Živanović et al., 2024). Although moderate anxiety can improve focus, when it exceeds a certain threshold which tends to be higher in male students the effect becomes detrimental (Meneses-Bucheli et al., 2024). Academic demands such as exams and assignments are major causes of stress (Gonzaga et al., 2022), while personal factors like achievement orientation and performance pressure also exacerbate anxiety (Becker & Börnert-Ringleb, 2024). Moreover, anxiety often co-occurs with depression, further worsening academic performance (Müller et al., 2023). Therefore, proactive institutional programs need to be implemented to address anxiety predictors, including the management of daily responsibilities (Lisnyj et al., 2020). Specifically for students, flexible schedules and psychological support are crucial considerations (He et al., 2024).

2. Interpersonal Communication Models of Teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan

Teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan apply three models of interpersonal communication in interacting with students to overcome anxiety, especially among twelfth-grade students. The linear model is used through one-way information delivery, such as direct advice from teachers to students regarding strategies to face anxiety. The interactive model involves two-way dialogue between teachers and students, allowing students to provide responses or feedback on the guidance received. Meanwhile, the transactional model is the most dominant approach, characterized by dynamic message exchanges where students express their anxieties and teachers actively respond with relevant guidance. One student revealed that teachers provide advice regarding the choice of majors, suitable state universities, and selection pathways that are not burdensome. The Guidance and Counseling teacher confirmed that direct and face-to-face communication is the main method in handling anxiety commonly experienced by students approaching graduation.

The use of linear, interactive, and transactional communication models in the environment of Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan shows an increasing tendency towards the application of the transactional model. This shift reflects the need for active student involvement in the communication process, especially in the complex context of university selection involving various pathways and major choices. The transactional model allows for dynamic and reciprocal dialogue, where students can express their anxieties in line with the madrasah's values emphasizing mutual trust between teachers and students. This finding expands Hovland's communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of communication in shaping attitudes, by affirming that the transactional model is more effective in the context of Islamic education that prioritizes two-way interaction (Muslimin, 2022). Communication in madrasahs highlights the relevance of the

transactional model in creating more participatory and responsive communication (Nurhanifah, 2021).

The linear, interactive, and transactional communication models represent different approaches to understanding the communication process. The linear communication model is a one-way process where messages are sent from sender to receiver without feedback, thus it is simple but limited because it does not consider the receiver's response or the communication context (Šeba, 2020). In contrast, the interactive communication model introduces feedback elements, making communication two-way and enabling more dynamic and responsive information exchanges, such as through token-passing mechanisms in interactive media (Guse & Wong, 2022; Huang & Kim, 2021; Fürst, 2015). Meanwhile, the transactional communication model views communication as a simultaneous process, where senders and receivers exchange messages simultaneously, considering social context, experiences, and each other's environment (Otte, 2023; Parackal & Parackal, 2019).

3. Interpersonal Communication Strategies of Teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan

Teachers apply verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to help students manage anxiety. Verbally, teachers provide advice about major choices, universities, and appropriate selection pathways, such as the National Selection Based on Tests. Nonverbally, teachers use body language, such as smiling, hand gestures, or approaching students to ensure understanding, as observed in classroom interactions. The Homeroom Teacher states that anxiety among twelfth-grade students is common and suggests universities that match students' abilities. Teachers organize daily religious activities, such as reading three pages of the Qur'an (tahsin) every morning and performing dhuha prayer of two rakaats in congregation, as part of the school routine. Teachers also apply Islamic communication principles, namely Qaulan Sadidah (truthful speech), Qaulan Karimah (polite speech), and Qaulan Baligha (effective speech), in interactions with students, as documented in observations.

The interpersonal communication strategies implemented by teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan include verbal and nonverbal approaches, religious practices, and the application of Islamic communication principles. The verbal approach, such as providing advice on major selection and educational pathways, aims to directly respond to students' academic needs. Meanwhile, nonverbal strategies, including the use of body language and facial expressions, play a role in strengthening the emotional connection between teachers and students. Religious practices, such as Qur'anic recitation and performing dhuha prayer, as well as the application of Islamic communication principles like qaulan sadidan, qaulan kariman, and qaulan balighan, reflect the Islamic identity of the madrasah and contribute to students' psychological stability amid academic pressure. The implementation of Islamic communication principles as regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019) emphasizes the importance of honest, polite, and effective communication in shaping interactions that support students' psychosocial well-being. This approach extends Hovland's communication theory by integrating the dimension of religious ethics, which is relevant in the context of madrasahs as educational institutions based on Islamic values. Thus, teachers' communication strategies function not only as a means of conveying information but also as instruments to

build a supportive environment aligned with the school's culture and spiritual values, capable of constructively responding to students' anxiety.

The interpersonal communication strategies used by teachers have undergone significant transformation, especially since the pandemic forced a shift from face-to-face interaction to remote learning. Teachers utilize digital tools such as cameras, screens, microphones, and email to maintain engagement and learning effectiveness in a virtual environment (Jasmins, 2022). In the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), self-disclosure and immediacy strategies have proven important in creating a supportive classroom climate that encourages student participation (Qin, 2022). Additionally, cross-cultural communication approaches emphasizing diversity, equality, and inclusion have become innovative strategies that strengthen personal and professional development in educational settings (Whalen et al., 2024).

4. Barriers and Efforts in Interpersonal Communication of Teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan

Students are encouraged to communicate with their parents, motivate themselves, and seek information from various sources, such as guidance counselors, homeroom teachers, or subject teachers. Communication barriers include students' bad moods, causing them to be reluctant to listen, and students' desire to choose majors or universities that do not match their academic values, as observed during counseling sessions. Efforts in communication with parents, self-motivation, and seeking information from various sources show a collaborative method to manage anxiety. Barriers such as students' bad moods or unrealistic academic goals reflect typical emotional and academic challenges in adolescents. This collaborative method strengthens Hovland's theory of communication shaping behavior by demonstrating that multi-party involvement increases communication effectiveness in reducing anxiety (Muslimin, 2022). These barriers also indicate the need for tailored communication, which is relevant in the madrasah environment that emphasizes personal relationships between teachers and students. This study enriches the understanding of interpersonal communication strategies by showing how Islam-based value approaches and multi-party collaboration can support students in facing the pressures of university selection. Various strategies have been implemented to improve communication skills of teachers and students, which have proven capable of significantly enhancing students' communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities. Comprehensive communication skills training curricula, guided by teachers or instructors, also show positive results in developing empathy, reflective practice, and effective message delivery (Chang et al., 2023). On the other hand, communication strategies are also crucial in handling disruptive behavior in the classroom, although further training is still needed for novice teachers (Karasova & Kleckova, 2023). Moreover, video-based coaching offers an innovative approach to honing communication skills through real-time observation and direct feedback (Freytag et al., 2022).

D. CONCLUSION

The interpersonal communication applied by teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al Ullum Medan adopts the transactional communication model, characterized by dynamic and reciprocal dialogue between teachers and students. This model has proven effective in helping



students manage anxiety, especially in facing the selection for entrance into state universities. The communication strategies used include verbal approaches, such as giving advice regarding majors and selection pathways, as well as nonverbal approaches through body language and empathetic expressions. In addition, Islamic communication principles such as qaulan sadidan, qaulan kariman, and qaulan balighan are consistently applied, synergizing with religious practices such as reading the Qur'an and performing dhuha prayer, to strengthen students' inner peace and psychological resilience in facing academic pressures. Teachers also face challenges in the form of anxiety from students and parents, students' fluctuating moods, and unrealistic academic expectations. These obstacles are addressed through individually tailored communication and collaborative approaches, including cooperation with tutoring institutions. Going forward, it is recommended that teachers prioritize the transactional communication model to encourage students' emotional engagement. Further research is suggested to explore the effectiveness of applying this model in various other Islamic education contexts to broaden the understanding of comprehensive academic anxiety management.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Author 1 : Designing the theory and methodology, collecting and analyzing data, then compiling the report.
- Author 2 : Conducting a literature review, designing instruments, integrating research findings, and editing the final manuscript for publication.

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