Interpersonal Communication in the Character Building of Students in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

Islamic boarding schools are Islamic institutions that help and develop students from a religious perspective which includes character formation. One of the success factors in forming the character of students in Islamic boarding schools is the role of a teacher. A teacher must be able to communicate well with students by prioritizing student discipline and politeness. One of the communications carried out in developing students is interpersonal communication. This research aims to find out how teachers' interpersonal communication approaches and strategies shape the character of Islamic boarding school students in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study type. Data sources were taken from ten informants through direct interviews using a set of interview protocols. The informants consisted of teachers at Islamic boarding schools and students. All interview data obtained was analyzed thematically using the Milles & Hubberman Interactive Analysis Model technique. Research findings found three identification approaches and two interpersonal communication strategies used by teachers in forming students' characters. The three identification approaches are the cultural approach, the sociological approach, and the psychological approach. The two strategies used by the teacher are punishment and catalyst strategies. This research has revealed teachers' interpersonal communication approaches and strategies in shaping the character of Islamic boarding school students in Indonesia. Apart from that, the results of this research can be used as a reference for anyone who wants to manage an educational institution in the form of an Islamic boarding school.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the most important element in the lives of social creatures (Dimbleby & Burton, 2020). To socialize and interact with other people, communication is needed. Communication will occur when someone conveys a message to another person and that person responds to what we say (Mahadi, 2021; Rambe et al., 2022). For communication to run well, a communicator must convey

a message to another person and that person responds to what we say (Handayani, 2011; Mahadi, 2021; Rambe et al., 2022). For communication to run well, a communicator must convey the message well and clearly so that it is easily understood by the communicant, as well as create a good and comfortable atmosphere between both parties (Handayani, 2011; Engerer et al., 2019).

The forms of interaction and communication that occur in Islamic boarding schools can be seen through the process of a teacher and students or students and students when interacting (Halik, 2016). From this form of communication, you can imagine how interpersonal communication occurs. Interpersonal communication activities carried out by humans every day certainly have goals or hopes. The aims of interpersonal communication are very diverse, but essentially interpersonal communication aims to create mutual understanding between the parties involved in the communication (Ruesch et al., 2017).

Interpersonal communication can shape human intellectual, mental, and social development (Rusdayanti & Suranata, 2023; Hsb & Mantondang, 2024). As social creatures, humans always want to talk, exchange ideas, receive and send information. Communication can also be used as a tool for transforming religious, social, and educational values. Especially in today's modern era, the formation of Islamic character is very much needed in creating an Islamic society amid social change and the flow of modernization. Modernization not only has a positive effect on human life but also has a negative effect that gives rise to social problems such as socio-economic inequality, environmental pollution, crime, consumerism, and juvenile delinquency. Social problems like this are challenges and obstacles in the modernization process and must be faced by everyone. Therefore, the process of forming Islamic character through communication is very important, which aims to free humans from ignorance, invite people to do good and evil, and believe in monotheism to Allah (Primay & Savitri, 2021).

Every day teachers deal directly and communicate with students, both in teaching and learning activities, and with students who violate the rules. The interaction carried out between teachers and students is a form of interpersonal communication, because communication takes the form of dialogue which allows for the exchange of information and feedback between teachers and students. Dialogic communication is very important because it is more effective compared to other methods. This is intended to create an effective learning process so that the delivery and application of Islamic character values to students are better conveyed (Sari, 2018; Ramadan & Aesthetic, 2022; Sibaweh & Hanan, 2022). Apart from that, teachers also communicate in extracurricular activities, such as *muhadharoh* which is carried out once a week, and activities *muthola'ah* which is held every morning. Interaction between teachers and students is a form of interpersonal communication because communication carried out is dialogical which allows for the exchange of information and feedback between teachers and students (Hastasari et al., 2022).

In interpersonal communication, the relationship between the communicator and the communicant must be maintained well, because whether a communication is successful or not depends on the good relationship they build. There are two stages of a relationship, the first stage is called the introduction stage, the communicator should give a good impression during the first introduction, such as having an attractive appearance and a good impression. The second stage is strengthening the relationship, four factors are important in maintaining the relationship, namely the familiarity factor or fulfillment of feelings of affection, the control factor (both parties control each other), the response determination factor, namely giving a response by the stimulus received, the harmony factor of the emotional atmosphere when ongoing communication (Rustan, 2015; Manurung & Rahmi, 2022).

Based on Scopus data, previous research used several keywords that refer to research on interpersonal communication carried out by teachers in shaping students' character, such as communication, interpersonal, character, and student seen in the following image.
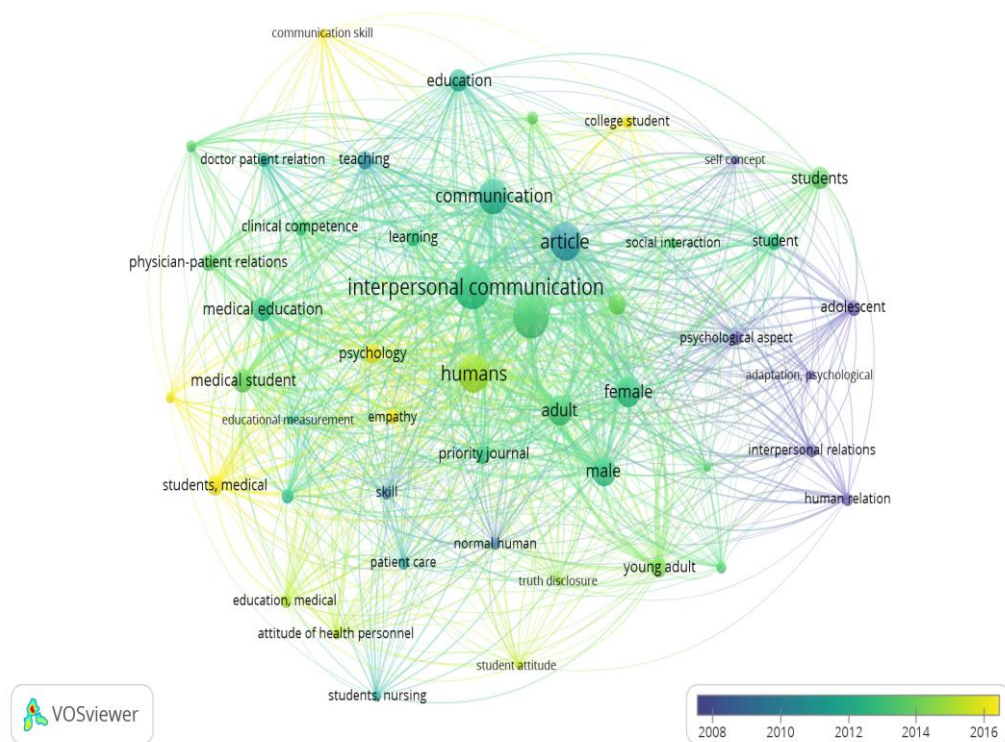
Fig 1. Several keywords that refer to teacher interpersonal communication and student character by world researchers (Scopus database)

Research related to interpersonal communication carried out by teachers in shaping the character of students based on Scopus found 146 documents, but not a single document was found that specifically discussed the interpersonal communication methods of teachers in shaping the character of students, especially in dormitory-based school educational institutions. This research specifically discusses teacher approaches and strategies for interpersonal communication in shaping the character of students in boarding school-based schools.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with a case study approach (case study design) (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016; Martell, 2017; Marshall et al., 2020; Engkizar et al., 2022; Mutathahiri et al., 2022). Data sources were taken from ten informants through in-depth interviews who were selected using techniques purposive sampling. According to Engkizar et al., (2018); Sultanik et al., (2022); Febriani et al., (2022) The selection of informants must meet four criteria, namely, they are still active in the field being researched, have competence related to the problem being researched, are willing to take the time to provide information to researchers, and honestly provide information according to the facts that occur in the field.

After the interviews were completed with all informants, the process of transcribing the interview data was carried out and themes were then extracted according to the aims and needs of the research data. According to Sivakumar, (2020); Helena et al., (2020); Alfarikh et al., (2021); Engkizar et al., (2022) Thematic analysis is one of the analytical techniques that researchers can use to analyze interview results so that they can be seen clearly and are easy for readers to understand. The entire thematic analysis process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews conducted with ten informants, the results of the analysis found that there were three identification approaches and two interpersonal communication strategies used by teachers and students in forming students' characters. The three identification approaches are the cultural approach, the sociological approach, and the psychological approach. The two strategies used by the teacher, namely the punishment strategy and the catalyst strategy, can be seen in figure 2, below.
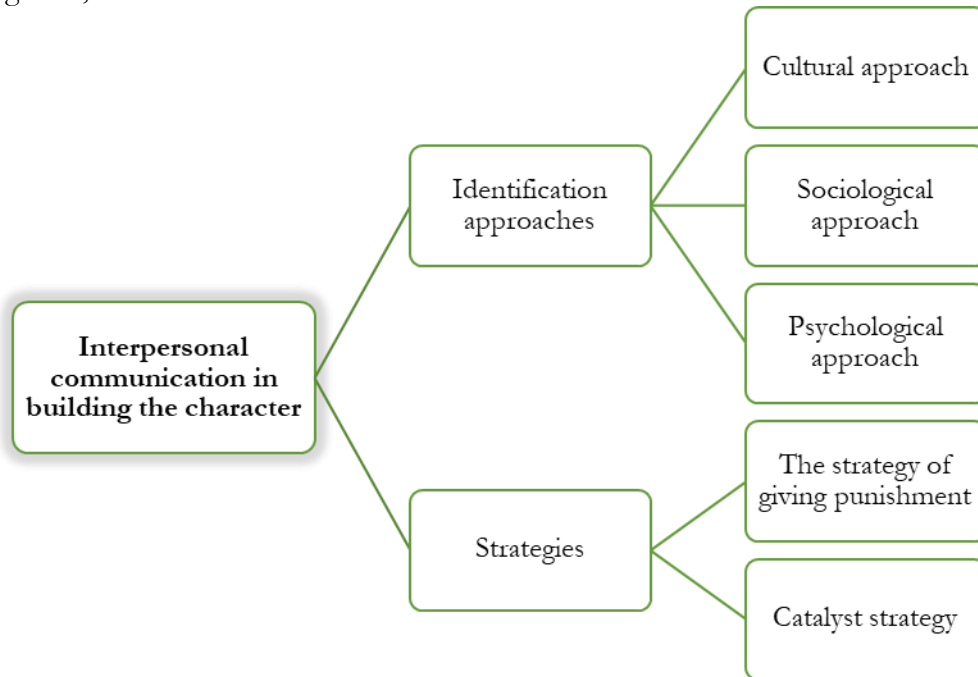
Fig 2. Interpersonal communication in building the character of students in Islamic boarding schools

Based on figure 2, the author can explain that after holding in-depth interviews with informants, there are three identification approaches and two interpersonal communication strategies used by teachers and students in forming students' characters. Next, the author will describe quotes from interviews with informants based on the identification approach and strategy above. The interview description displayed is a quote from a short statement from the informant when the interview was conducted. Even though the interview quotations were conveyed by informants in slightly different languages, they have more or less the same aim and meaning.

First research findings found three approaches to identifying interpersonal communication used by teachers and students in forming students' characters. The three identification approaches are the cultural approach, the sociological approach, and the psychological approach.

The first approach is the cultural approach. The character formation of students in Islamic boarding schools depends on the teacher's attitude or behavior towards their students. Whether this attitude is good or bad, students will more or less imitate it. The approach taken by teachers and school leaders is a cultural analysis approach. Because culture is a collection of orders, norms, habits, ideas, and social institutions that are shared by a group of people (Istiqomalia, 2024). There are two types of culture, namely homogeneous, namely when people in a culture behave more or less the same and evaluate things in the same way. Meanwhile, heterogeneous ones have different behavioral patterns in the values they adhere to (Liu et al., 2019; Uhbiyati, 2015).

The cultural approach taken in schools such as includes: life habits, ethics, honesty, compassion, love of learning, responsibility, respect for laws and

regulations, respect for other people, love of work, liking to save, liking to work hard, and being punctual. This good culture must be exemplified by teachers to students. So that students can understand and implement it. More specifically in Islamic boarding schools which are 24 hours a day, students are in the school environment.

Through school culture, outsiders will see distinctive characteristics school which can be identified through the values it adheres to, the attitudes it has, the habits it displays, and the actions shown by all personnel school which forms a special unit of the system school. This cultural approach was conveyed by the informant as in the following interview excerpt.

As a substitute for parents of students at this school, I build students' character by modeling good culture while at school. that culture, namely the culture of smiles, greetings, and greetings (I-1), ... at school students discover cultural diversity from their friends, as a teacher I always teach each other to respect and appreciate every culture that exists. I can also carry out cultural activities that can introduce good culture at school so that good character values are instilled in students (I-2)

The second approach is the sociological approach. Communication is very necessary in an educational institution because, without communication between one another, there will be no relationship. Communication is the main means in the life of social creatures, meaning that no one can withdraw from this process in carrying out their functions as individuals and social creatures (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Lubis & Octavia, 2017). Relationships between humans are built through communication, in other words, communication is the most effective means of building relationships relationships between us and other people, and without communication, humans will not be able to socialize and interact (Bassani-Sternberg et al., 2016; Ringland et al., 2016).

The form of interpersonal communication carried out by teachers with students in learning at school can be seen from social communication in teaching books. The teacher reads it and interprets it. The form of interpersonal communication in this book study is that the teacher has a face-to-face meeting and the response from other communicators is direct. As quoted from the interview with the informant below.

I cultivate good character in students by using a social approach to learning. I explain the learning material and students are asked to listen, read, or write the meaning of the words in the book. The student reads according to what the teacher explains and understands it wisely. If the student makes a mistake then I as the teacher will correct it and explain again (I-3)

The third approach is approach psychological. Learners need role models to develop their character and potential. Exemplary behavior is education by providing real examples to students. In Islamic boarding schools, role modeling is very emphasized. School principals and teachers must always set a good example for students, for example in daily life rituals and other small things. The more consistent a school principal or teacher is in maintaining his behavior, the more his teachings will be heard by students. Students will obey and see the authority of a teacher when the teacher provides a good example and role model for their students. This psychological approach was conveyed by the informant in the following interview excerpt.

...is a teacher and must understand the psychology of students, including understanding the character of each student, have an approach, and also understand each condition that students have in participating in learning activities. so that when communication occurs with students, it can be established well and students feel comfortable with their teachers and can develop their character (I-4), ... in developing the character of students teachers must understand student development and choose the best learning environment and get to know the students' personalities better then the teacher begins to model how good role models for students, for example in daily life rituals (I-5)

Teachers must instill more love in students in learning, especially the character of each teacher who has a good role model and establishes good

communication (Palunga & Marzuki, 2017; Amala & Kaltsum, 2021; Judrah et al., 2024). This is because students always need guidance as a reference. In the formation stage of students who are still unstable, sometimes their behavior still does not find the desired character form (Sidiq, 2019). Because several factors make students still interested in life outside school (Tata & Prasad, 2015).

Second research findings found two interpersonal communication identification strategies used by teachers and students in forming students' characters. The first strategy is a punishment strategy. Punishment strategies are applied when students start to get lazy or bored when the lesson time is nearing the end. So the teacher gives punishment in the form of writing verses from the Alquran such as Surah Yasin or memorizing letters in the Alquran. This is done so that students think again when they want to take this action. The strategy of providing punishment so that students reduce or limit unwanted behavior or behavior that violates school rules. This strategy is an interpersonal communication control strategy given by teachers to students by giving punishments so that students reduce or limit their unnecessary behavior, such as skipping school, smoking, and being late for class, as in the following quote from the informant's interview.

In developing students' character, I use a strategy of giving punishment to students who do not comply with school rules. The punishment can be in the form of memorizing the Alquran. Then I communicate directly with students who violate them by providing advice and guidance (I-6)

The second strategy is the catalyst strategy. The catalyst strategy is an interpersonal communication control strategy given by teachers to students by providing punishment and sanctions for students who commit violations and for students who do not comply with the Islamic boarding school. If students often break the rules with the same mistakes, the teachers will immediately send a summons to the student's parents as per the following interview excerpt.

In developing and guiding students while at school, sometimes I as a teacher have to communicate with parents regarding student behavior while at school. This communication occurs if students make the same mistake after being given a warning by the teacher, communication with parents can be done by giving a summons to the parents (I-7)

This catalyst strategy is used in communicating with students and students' parents. The way this strategy is used is to ignore unwanted responses or distort unwanted responses by providing a positive interpretation. Where the teacher will assess that each student is unique, and each student has their strengths because a person's attitude and personality are different (Sondakh et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The interpersonal communication process carried out by teachers and students in forming students' characters can be carried out using three identification approaches and two interpersonal communication strategies. The three identification approaches are the cultural approach, the sociological approach, and the psychological approach. The two strategies used by the ustad are the punishment strategy and the catalyst strategy. At least this research can be used as a basis and reference for future researchers to research this problem in different contexts and problems.

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