



INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN DEVELOPING EXCELLENT CHARACTER THROUGH STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

Sari Dea Ika Meilani¹, Suyono², Almaydza Pratama Abnisa³

¹Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Publisistik Thawalib Jakarta, Indonesia; sarideakameilani@gmail.com * (coresponden)

²STAI Nurul Abror Al-Robbaniyyin Banyuwangi, Indonesia; yon.mabruy@gmail.com

³Institut Asy-Syukriyyah Tangerang, Indonesia; almaydzaprataabnisa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the methods of interpersonal communication applied by administrators in developing positive character in students through the implementation of discipline at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School, Depok. The background of this study is the importance of interpersonal communication in supporting students, not only in academic aspects but also in moral and character development. Interpersonal communication serves as the primary foundation in the process of cultivating consistent disciplinary behavior. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The results indicate that the administrators implement interpersonal communication patterns that include emotional bonding, personal approaches, and role modeling in daily activities. The forms of communication used involve both verbal and nonverbal actions, delivered in a polite and educational manner. Obstacles encountered in the character-building process through interpersonal communication were identified as minimal, considering the relatively small number of students, which allows for more intensive guidance. Minor challenges mainly arise from external cultural influences brought by students after holidays, such as interest in K-pop. However, the administrators successfully redirected students' attention and motivation toward learning through encouraging and educational communication. The study concludes that the interpersonal communication patterns implemented by the administrators play a significant and effective role in shaping students' excellent character through the disciplinary habits instilled in boarding school life.

Keyword: Interpersonal Communication, Excellent Character, Discipline, Students, Islamic Boarding School



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a vital role in shaping students' character through the integration of formal education, religious activities, and value-based learning. Character education is carried out not only through classroom learning but also through spiritual practices, worship, sermons, and community service that instill moral and social values (Purwanto et al., 2021). Some pesantren also integrate Sufi values, emphasizing the balance between human relationships with God (hablu minallah) and with fellow humans (hablu minannas) through study circles and social activities (Hasibuan et al., 2025). Extracurricular activities such as scouting, martial arts, youth Red Cross, and calligraphy further cultivate discipline, leadership, and empathy (Huda et al., 2024). Through the *taghyir* method, pesantren foster character changes in students to become more religious and moderate (Ikhram et al., 2023). Moreover, music education is employed as a creative medium to instill moral values (Sauri et al., 2022).

Hidden curriculum components in pesantren such as congregational prayers, classical text studies, and daily social interactions play an essential role in promoting moderation, openness, and tolerance among students (Salim et al., 2024). In addition, some pesantren integrate local cultural values with Islamic teachings, as exemplified by pesantren in Lombok, which combine Sasak traditions with Islamic education to strengthen character formation (Nashuddin, 2020). In response to modern challenges, several pesantren have developed entrepreneurial education blended with multicultural values, enabling students to develop adaptive and innovative character traits (Mariyono, 2025; Mariyono, 2024). Pesantren education also fosters an inclusive religious ideology through immersive learning experiences and social interactions, both among teachers and students, thereby cultivating tolerance and peace-loving attitudes in society (Purwanto et al., 2020; Anam et al., 2019).

The development of students with excellent character in pesantren requires a well-structured curriculum and full support from educators. For example, Character House in one Islamic faculty demonstrates the importance of a comprehensive curriculum, faculty support, and adequate facilities, although challenges such as limited active student engagement and resource constraints persist. Negative influences from social media and less conducive external environments are additional obstacles. However, opportunities for collaboration with external institutions and the use of digital technology can enhance the effectiveness of character education (Musadad et al., 2024). Furthermore, integrating religious dimensions with humanistic education principles in madrasas has proven effective in addressing moral challenges and fostering holistic character (Subiyantoro et al., 2026). Compassionate, value-based teaching methods rooted in Islamic principles also significantly strengthen students' religious character (Badri & Malik, 2024).

Character-based learning models, incorporating core Sufi teachings alongside Quranic stories, have been shown to effectively enhance students' moral and ethical development (Rahmat et al., 2016). Social environments also play a critical role in the internalization of character values; although Islamic education in Malaysia positively influences student character, social factors can affect the success of this internalization process (Dakir et al., 2015). Moreover, the hidden curriculum including interactions between lecturers and students, adherence to regulations, and participation in extracurricular activities substantially contributes to character development, particularly in Islamic law education (Obaid et al., 2024). Extracurricular activities such as religious guidance and community service further reinforce the practical application of learned values, supporting comprehensive character formation (Purwanto et al., 2021).

Communication in pesantren plays a crucial role in shaping students' character through exemplary behavior and educational interactions grounded in Islamic values. Teachers in pesantren function not only as instructors but also as role models, instilling Islamic values through daily conduct, emulating the Prophet Muhammad's method of teaching through tangible actions. The *taghyir* approach focuses on transforming students' personalities to be more religious, disciplined, and moderate, with support from teachers and parents (Ikhram et al., 2023). Furthermore, two-way communication is essential in character education, as it fosters empathy, mutual trust, and solidarity among students (Hastasari et al., 2022). Open communication patterns involving collaboration and effective communication strategies also play a key role in developing religious character and positive behaviors among students (Sastra Negara et al., 2024). Extracurricular activities, such as scouting, martial arts, and calligraphy, additionally cultivate discipline, leadership, and empathy (Huda et al., 2024).

Music and arts activities in pesantren, such as *marawis*, *rebana*, *qasidah*, and *nasyid*, serve as important tools for conveying moral messages and educational values that support the development of students with balanced personality and good ethics (Sauri et al., 2022). Sufi principles are also integrated into pesantren education, emphasizing spiritual relationships with God (hablu minallah) and social relationships with others (hablu minannas) through study circles and community service (Hasibuan et al., 2025). Some pesantren implement Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to deepen understanding of classical Islamic texts, promoting independence and responsibility in the learning process (Rohman, 2022). Pesantren such as SPMAA in Lamongan apply philosophical values in their curriculum to improve behavior and instill life principles that guide students in social life (Islamic et al., 2024).

This study highlights a gap in the literature regarding the direct link between interpersonal communication and character and discipline development in pesantren, leaving limited understanding of the mechanisms of character building through personal interactions. The novelty of this study lies in identifying interpersonal communication patterns including emotional attachment, personal approach, role modeling, verbal, and nonverbal communication as effective instruments for consistently shaping students' character. The study aims to understand how pesantren administrators implement interpersonal communication to support character and discipline formation at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School, Depok. The study shows that intensive and educational interpersonal communication not only instills discipline but also develops students with excellent character, capable of resisting external cultural influences, increasing learning motivation, and enhancing moral awareness. These findings can serve as a guideline for other pesantren administrators to develop effective communication strategies in character education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of interpersonal communication in shaping students' character at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School. In this approach, the data collected consist of two types: primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through observations and interviews. Observations were conducted on-site to examine interactions between administrators and students in daily activities. Interviews were carried out with administrators and students who met the study criteria, conducted two to three times over the course of one month to obtain more comprehensive information.

Additionally, secondary data were used to complement the information obtained from primary sources. These secondary data were collected from various documents available at the pesantren, such as institutional profiles, regulations, reports on student care programs, and students' activity schedules. These documents provided broader context and enriched the research findings. Data collection employed three main techniques: structured and in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to gather direct information from the informants, while observation allowed the researcher to directly witness the dynamics occurring within the pesantren. Documentation involved reviewing relevant records or materials, such as photos and activity reports, to strengthen the data already collected.

After data collection, analysis was conducted in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction aimed to filter and categorize relevant information. Data presentation involved organizing the data in an easily understandable format, such as tables or specific patterns. Conclusion drawing was carried out after data verification to ensure accuracy. To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher employed data and method triangulation. Data triangulation compared information obtained from various sources, including interviews, observations, and documentation. Method triangulation compared results from different data collection techniques to ensure the validity and completeness of the information obtained. This approach enables the study to provide a comprehensive and accurate depiction of the communication processes involved in character formation at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Regulations for Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM) at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School

The regulations for teaching and learning activities at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah govern the conduct of all students during the learning process. Key rules include punctuality for classes or halaqoh sessions. Students who arrive late for the first time are required to stand at the back of the class for 10 minutes, with an additional five minutes added for each subsequent late arrival. Uniform compliance is strictly enforced, including gamis, hijab, and niqab. Students not wearing the complete uniform receive guidance from teachers. Maintaining the cleanliness of classrooms or halaqoh rooms is mandatory; the responsible student must clean the room, or if the responsible party is unknown, all students will participate in cleaning.

Damage to classroom or halaqoh inventory, such as removing items or writing on walls, results in sanctions requiring the student to repair or replace the damaged items. Causing disturbances during learning sessions is recorded as a special violation and addressed by the class guardian. Sleeping during halaqoh is reprimanded directly by the teacher. Failure to complete homework is punished according to the severity of the offense. Unauthorized absences are considered "alfa," and students are required to receive guidance from their class guardian. Using computers or laptops without permission or supervision is prohibited, with sanctions including being barred from using such devices for one semester.

Verbal misconduct, such as foul language, insults, or mocking, results in a written apology retained by the class guardian or musyrifah. More severe sanctions are imposed for disrespect or insulting teachers, including written apologies signed by the class guardian, parents, and principal, as well as formal warning letters calling parents. Lying, physical bullying, or theft is heavily penalized, ranging from warnings to parental summons and the obligation to replace or repair stolen or damaged

property. These regulations aim to maintain order and create a conducive learning environment within the pesantren.

Matters related to student discipline and behavior within the dormitory environment. One of the main rules prohibits leaving the boarding school premises without permission. Violations may result in sanctions such as parental notification, issuance of a First Warning Letter, and, in severe cases, expulsion if the student engages in inappropriate conduct while outside the boarding school. Additionally, rules regarding sleeping arrangements are strictly enforced, including the obligation to sleep in assigned beds and to adhere to prescribed sleep and wake times. Noncompliance may result in warnings or disciplinary actions as deemed necessary.

Students are also required to follow rules regarding the use of electronic devices and jewelry. Bringing mobile phones or other electronic devices, such as cameras, radios, and MP3 players, without permission will result in confiscation, and these items will not be returned, accompanied by guidance from the head of the school. Moreover, bringing or wearing valuable items such as rings or necklaces is prohibited; such items will be confiscated and returned to parents. Activities inconsistent with Islamic teachings, including excessive use of cosmetics, singing, or discussing inappropriate topics such as films and celebrities, are also subject to sanctions, such as writing *sayyidul istighfar* and receiving guidance or reprimands.

Other regulations include prohibitions against bringing food during study sessions, maintaining long nails, or engaging in actions that violate Sharia. Stricter rules apply to students involved in impermissible relationships, such as dating or interacting with non-mahram individuals, which may result in heavier sanctions, including parental notification and issuance of a First Warning Letter. All these rules are implemented to maintain discipline, comfort, and the sanctity of the dormitory environment, ensuring that students can focus on learning and character development in accordance with the values of the boarding school.

Worship Division Regulations regulate students' discipline in performing obligatory acts of worship. For instance, arriving late to prayer without a Sharia-compliant reason results in sanctions, and repeated tardiness (more than three times) incurs stricter penalties. Students who fail to pray in designated areas or cause disturbances around prayer spaces will also face consequences, such as warnings or being required to stand behind the prayer area until prayers begin. Pretending to be menstruating without a Sharia-compliant reason constitutes a violation punishable by ritual purification (*ghusl*), compensatory prayers, and additional duties.

Language Division Regulations aim to enhance proper language use within the boarding school environment. Violations, such as failing to use the Indonesian language in daily communication, are sanctioned according to the severity of the infraction. Delays in participating in division activities may also result in disciplinary measures.

Cleanliness Division Regulations emphasize the importance of maintaining cleanliness in the dormitory and the boarding school environment. Students who fail to complete assigned cleaning duties or leave dirty laundry unattended may face sanctions, such as confiscation of personal items or on-the-spot punishments. Additionally, defacing facilities, including walls, desks, and chairs, results in mandatory cleaning or repainting at the student's expense.

Health Division Regulations address students' eating habits and general hygiene. For example, failing to eat in designated areas or wasting food incurs penalties, as do neglecting daily exercise or failing to bathe at least once per day. Bringing instant noodles or other unauthorized food items will also result in confiscation.

Library Division Regulations emphasize the proper care of books and library facilities. Students who return books late or damage library materials are required to organize or replace them. Bringing fictional books into the library may also result in confiscation.

Finally, Pick-Up and Return Regulations govern students' discipline regarding permissions to leave the boarding school. Students not picked up by their parents without clear justification will have their leave privileges reduced. Late returns, whether during regular departures or authorized leave, result in the revocation of regular leave privileges.

Each division at Al-Mar'atush Sholihah Islamic Boarding School enforces strict rules to ensure students adhere to established regulations, maintaining discipline in all aspects of boarding school life, including worship, language, cleanliness, health, library usage, and pick-up and return procedures.

Daily Activities of Students at Al-Mar'atush Sholihah Islamic Boarding School

The daily schedule for students at Al-Mar'atush Sholihah Islamic Boarding School begins at 04:00 with waking up and performing *Qiyamullail* until 04:30. From 04:40 to 06:00, students perform congregational *Subuh* prayer followed by morning *dhikr*. Morning activities continue with bathing, breakfast, dormitory cleaning duties, and preparation for school, lasting from 06:00 to 07:00. From 07:00 to 08:10, students participate in *tahfizh* Al-Qur'an sessions (recitation), followed by morning academic classes (*KBM pagi*) from 08:10 to 09:20. A short break is scheduled from 09:20 to 09:45 before continuing the morning classes until 11:30. Students then have a midday nap (*Qailulah*) from 11:30 to 12:30, followed by congregational *Dhuhur* prayer and lunch from 12:30 to 13:30.

Afternoon academic classes (*KBM siang*) are held from 13:30 to 15:15, followed by *tahfizh* Al-Qur'an review sessions (*muraja'ah*) from 15:15 to 15:45. From 15:45 to 16:05, students perform *Asr* prayer and evening *dhikr*, followed by afternoon classes and specialized *tahfizh* programs for students enrolled in the *tahfizh* program until 17:00. From 17:00 to 18:00, students carry out dormitory cleaning duties, bathing, and prepare for *Maghrib* prayer, which is performed in congregation from 18:00 to 18:30. Dinner and preparation for *Isha* prayer take place from 18:30 to 19:30, with congregational *Isha* prayer held from 19:30 to 20:00. Evening study sessions are conducted from 20:00 to 21:30, followed by preparation for sleep from 21:30 to 22:00. The daily routine concludes with nighttime rest from 22:00 to 04:00.

Primary Interpersonal Communication Patterns

Interpersonal communication at Al-Mar'atush Sholihah Islamic Boarding School is conducted directly, intensively, and in an educational manner. The school administration employs an authoritative yet empathetic communication approach, balancing firmness with care. Students are not merely reprimanded; they are engaged in discussions, given personal advice, and guided through practical examples. This approach facilitates students' acceptance of guidance, especially when communication is conducted in a friendly and personalized manner. One student, Abidah, remarked that admonitions from the staff felt more like learning opportunities than expressions of anger: "Sometimes they explain while conversing, or directly provide examples, so we feel comfortable receiving it." This indicates that warm, educational, and exemplary interpersonal communication effectively shapes students' character and instills values of discipline and ethics.

In addition to vertical communication between staff and students, horizontal communication between senior and junior students is also prominent. Senior students act as mentors or older siblings, providing guidance in a relaxed yet authoritative manner. This model fosters mutual respect, strengthens internal control, and supports a culture of discipline within the boarding school. Adelia,

a senior student, emphasized that they must set an example before correcting younger students: "If we neglect discipline, they will not comply." Thus, open, attentive, and educational communication is key to harmonious and effective relationships, fostering social responsibility among students in both vertical and horizontal interactions.

The communication patterns at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah align with interpersonal communication theories proposed by Pace, Bochner, and Rogers, which emphasize direct message exchange and immediate feedback. At this boarding school, communication occurs not only vertically but also horizontally among students, allowing dialogue for sharing perspectives, providing input, and correcting behavior. This pattern also reflects circular communication, in which feedback from the message recipient is returned to the sender. Feedback occurs through discussion, deliberation, or acknowledgment of mistakes, which is then responded to persuasively by the staff. This process not only conveys information but also builds emotional interaction, effectively shaping students' character and discipline.

In addition to direct communication, the boarding school employs verbal symbols, such as spoken advice, and nonverbal symbols, including facial expressions, gestures, and vocal intonation, to reinforce moral and disciplinary messages. Secondary media, such as notice boards or internal digital platforms, are used to communicate rules, schedules, or important information to all students. This combination of direct and indirect communication creates effective, comprehensive, and continuous interaction. Furthermore, interpersonal communication with Islamic education teachers significantly influences students' learning outcomes. Personal interaction, direct guidance, and persuasive approaches from teachers play a crucial role in character formation, improving discipline, and instilling religious values (Ramadhani & Faridah, 2025; Jannah et al., 2024), making interpersonal communication a fundamental pillar of character education in the boarding school.

Effectiveness of Communication in Fostering Discipline

The *kyai* (Islamic scholars or leaders) employ interpersonal communication patterns to instill discipline and character values in students. Consistent communication strategies, the *kyai's* exemplary behavior, and personal interactions contribute to establishing a culture of discipline and religious conduct within the boarding school environment (Imamah, 2023). The interpersonal communication methods applied at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School have a significant impact on the formation of student discipline. Communication that is persuasive, personalized, and exemplified through good role models has been shown to be more effective than methods relying solely on coercion. Students tend to respond more positively when guided with advice and emotionally considerate approaches, rather than through force or sanctions. One student, Adelia, explained: "If I receive proper guidance and am spoken to directly, I become more aware of my mistakes. I do not want to repeat them because of shame, not fear of the consequences."

This gentle yet continuous communication approach successfully creates an environment conducive to cultivating positive habits. Supervisors aim to gradually instill awareness of discipline rather than enforcing it abruptly. One staff member explained: "We instill in students the understanding that discipline is not something frightening, but a habit that needs to be trained and developed. Therefore, we build communication that is inviting and educational, rather than relying on anger or coercion." Furthermore, close relationships between supervisors and students foster trust, which is crucial in shaping disciplined behavior. Students feel more responsible because they do not want to disappoint supervisors who have guided them with attention and care. Putri, a student, stated: "When I make a mistake or violate a rule, what I feel is not fear of punishment, but shame

toward the supervisors who have trusted me." The effectiveness of interpersonal communication in fostering discipline is strongly influenced by the quality of the emotional relationship between supervisors and students. When students feel respected, understood, and nurtured through a humane approach, they are more motivated to comply with rules and uphold responsibilities voluntarily, rather than under pressure or coercion. Thus, communication based on empathetic and understanding relationships proves to be more effective in cultivating discipline among students.

Formation of Exemplary Character

The results of this study indicate that the development process at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School successfully fosters discipline and cultivates exemplary character among students, reflecting Islamic values—particularly the four primary traits of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): *shiddiq* (truthfulness), *tabligh* (ability to convey), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *fathanah* (intelligence). The school administrators, as stated by Ustadzah Fatimah, emphasize that discipline is not limited to punctuality but also encompasses values such as honesty, responsibility, and reliability. These values form an integral part of the noble character that is taught and nurtured from the beginning of students' lives at the boarding school.

The character of honesty (*shiddiq*) is evident in students' openness and willingness to admit mistakes without fear or shame. One student explained, "I used to make excuses to justify my lateness. Now, I choose to be honest and admit my mistakes because honesty is valued and appreciated here." The cultivation of trustworthiness (*amanah*) is achieved by assigning responsibilities from the start, such as cleaning duties, managing the dormitory, or serving on committees. A senior student stated, "If we are entrusted with responsibilities here, we must manage them well. If we are negligent or undisciplined, the trust from supervisors and peers will be lost."

The traits of *tabligh* (the ability to convey truth) and *fathanah* (intelligence) are also clearly observed in student behavior, particularly in the polite ways they advise peers and provide guidance. A staff member explained, "We train them to express opinions respectfully, reminding peers of mistakes without causing embarrassment. This is part of developing *tabligh* and *fathanah*." The development of these character traits does not occur instantly but through a long-term process involving effective communication, habituation of good behavior, and relationships built with care and attention. This process demonstrates that the interpersonal approach at the boarding school effectively instills Islamic values comprehensively in students' daily lives. Consequently, the school not only fosters disciplined individuals but also creates a generation with high moral character, ready to make positive contributions to society.

Field observations indicate that daily habits of discipline—such as punctuality, responsibility for tasks, and adherence to rules—are key to character development. Discipline is understood not merely as compliance with technical regulations but as a step toward moral and spiritual maturity. Exemplary character emerges not only through teaching but also through consistent habits and constructive communication. In this context, discipline directly supports the development of values such as *shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah*. For example, when students demonstrate honesty even in difficult situations, it reflects the internalization of *shiddiq*. Likewise, maintaining entrusted responsibilities exemplifies the cultivation of *amanah*. Therefore, discipline provides a strong foundation for the manifestation of exemplary character in students' daily actions.

The process of character development through discipline and interpersonal interaction aligns with Qur'anic teachings. In Q.S. Al-Baqarah, verse 253, Allah elevates some prophets above others, granting them distinction, which underscores that individual excellence is closely related to

responsibility, trust, and exemplary conduct. The four primary traits of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) *shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* serve as benchmarks for character development in students. These values are not only taught theoretically but also cultivated through real-life experiences in daily communication and interaction at the boarding school. This approach aligns with Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 21, which affirms that the Prophet is the ultimate exemplar for humanity. Therefore, character education in the boarding school is grounded in exemplary role modeling rather than mere instruction or theory. In conclusion, the efforts to develop exemplary character at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School through interpersonal communication and disciplined habituation reflect a harmonious integration of pedagogical-psychological approaches and Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and the Prophet's example. This demonstrates that the boarding school functions not only as a center for religious learning but also as a comprehensive and holistic institution for character formation.

CONCLUSION

Effective interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in shaping the exemplary character of students at Al-Mar'atuh Sholihah Islamic Boarding School. Trust and openness serve as key factors in creating successful communication. The boarding school administrators, acting as parental figures, must serve as role models in establishing trust with students, so that students feel comfortable sharing problems and receiving guidance. Openness between students and administrators facilitates wise and comfortable communication, enabling the character-building process to proceed optimally. The development of exemplary character is also influenced by two main supporting factors: the openness of administrators and the ability to communicate effectively. Openness allows students to share their problems, while proficiency in language facilitates clear communication between administrators and students. However, there are also two inhibiting factors: the diverse behaviors of students and the influence of popular culture. The variability in student character, which is sometimes difficult to manage, and the influence of popular culture can distract students, hindering their motivation to learn and their character development. Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed. For administrators, it is advised to continue strengthening students' confidence in communication, maintain warm and educational communication patterns, and develop communication skills through training. Administrators also need to anticipate external cultural influences by framing disciplinary messages in ways that are relevant and engaging for students. For students, it is expected that they will be more open in communicating with administrators and more selective in filtering external cultural influences, so as to maintain discipline and Islamic values.

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