



Interpersonal Communication and Problem Solving in Improving the Performance of Foster Parents of Students in Islamic Boarding Schools

M. Fakhroni Hamzah¹, Umar Mansur^{2*}, Abu Hasan Agus R³, Akmal Mundiri⁴, Putri Fahmadia Dinda Maulida Thohir⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Nurul Jadid, East Java, Indonesia

Email : umarmansur@unuja.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

This study aims to identify and analyze the role of interpersonal communication and problem-solving strategies in improving the performance of foster parents in Islamic boarding schools. The main problem raised is the lack of effectiveness of foster parents due to communication barriers and internal conflict resolution. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in the Ar Rumi area. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations of kyai, foster parents, and students. The results of the study indicate that the pattern of interpersonal communication between kyai and foster parents takes place in the form of routine and structured two-way interactions, with kyai as the provider of direction and foster parents as the reporter. Problem solving strategies through mediation and counseling have proven effective in creating a harmonious foster atmosphere. In conclusion, good interpersonal communication and the right problem solving approach significantly improve the readiness and performance of foster parents in fostering students. This study contributes to strengthening the foster management system in the Islamic boarding school environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren have a clear hierarchical structure, where the Kyai or leader of the pesantren is at the top, followed by the ustadz and senior students (Nia, 2022; Umam, 2021). This hierarchy influences the way communication takes place, with respect and obedience being important elements in daily interactions. In many pesantren, the Kyai plays a central role in the lives of the students (Hakim & Sopwandin, 2023; Zakiya et al., 2023). Interpersonal communication between the Kyai and the students often takes the form of direct advice and teaching, which includes not only academic aspects but also moral and spiritual aspects. This emphasizes the importance of effective and personal communication

between the Kyai and the students for the success of pesantren education. Interpersonal communication in pesantren is not only about conveying information, but also building strong emotional relationships (Nurrachmah, 2024). The closeness between students and the Kyai or ustadz often creates a deep emotional bond (Fuady, 2023), which can influence the motivation and behavior of students in learning and worshiping. Foster parents in Islamic boarding schools often play an important role in monitoring the development of students, both academically and spiritually (Abidin et al., 2023; Rahmandani, 2024). Interpersonal communication between foster parents and students is the main tool in providing guidance and support. Regular meetings and guidance sessions are part of this coaching effort.

According to Hasibuan, the process of conveying certain information, thoughts, and attitudes between two or more people that involves exchanging messages, both as communicants and communicators, is called interpersonal communication (Hasibuan, 2024). In this communication, each individual plays a role alternately as the sender and receiver of the message. The main purpose of interpersonal communication is to achieve mutual understanding regarding the problem being discussed (Fitriani, 2023; Ulfa et al., 2021). When individuals are involved in this communication process, they try to convey information clearly and receive feedback that helps them understand each other's perspectives. Through continuous dialogue and dynamic interaction, it is hoped that interpersonal communication will bring about positive changes in the attitudes and behaviors of all parties involved. This process not only helps in solving problems but also strengthens interpersonal relationships and improves cooperation between individuals.

Research by Febrianti and Subroto (2023) shows that good parenting is closely related to high levels of interpersonal communication (Febrianti & Subroto, 2023). Parenting that supports and pays attention to children's emotional needs can help them develop effective communication skills. Conversely, if adolescents experience poor parenting, such as lack of attention or indifference from parents, their level of interpersonal communication tends to be lower. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, appropriate parenting can develop social intelligence, independence, and discipline in students (Badriyah et al., 2024; Lisnawati, 2023; Sinthia et al., 2020).

Communication plays a very important role in managing conflicts that occur within the organization, both as a preventive and repressive measure (Rasida et al., 2024; F. A. Siregar & Usriyah, 2021). As a preventive measure, communication helps identify potential conflicts early on and prevents them from developing into bigger problems. Meanwhile, as a repressive measure, communication functions to defuse conflicts that have already occurred by

conveying messages that can calm and find joint solutions. In addition, communication plays a crucial role in implementing various conflict management activities in organizations (Suhairi et al., 2023). This includes coordination between organizational members, delivery of policies and procedures, and mediation in conflict situations.

Furthermore, communication also has an informative role, where accurate and timely information is conveyed to reduce uncertainty and misunderstandings that can trigger conflict (Zebua et al., 2024). The regulatory role of communication helps in establishing clear rules and norms so that every member of the organization understands what is expected of them. The persuasive role of communication allows influence on the attitudes and behavior of organizational members to support problem solving. Finally, the integrative role of communication aims to unite different views and interests, creating cohesion and harmony in the organization (Picasso & Kriyantono, 2024). Thus, communication functions as a multifunctional tool in managing and resolving conflicts, as well as maintaining organizational stability and productivity.

Then in Azka's research on interpersonal communication patterns between kiai and santri in Islamic boarding schools, it shows that there are three important symbols in this relationship: mind, self, and society (Azka, 2022). Mind refers to the thoughts and perceptions held by students and kiai, which form the basis of their interactions. Self relates to self-identity, where the kiai plays a role in shaping the spiritual and moral identity of students through teachings and examples. Society reflects social and community relationships in Islamic boarding schools, where interpersonal communication between kiai and students helps strengthen social bonds and a sense of togetherness. Through these symbols, kiai are able to guide students in developing critical thinking, forming character, and interacting with their social environment (Imaduddin, 2024). This study highlights the importance of effective interpersonal communication in creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the holistic development of students in the context of da'wah learning in Islamic boarding schools.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the approach that combines aspects of interpersonal communication with problem solving in the context of improving the performance of foster parents of students in Islamic boarding schools. While previous studies may have explored these two aspects separately, this study offers a new perspective by integrating them to see how the synergy between communication and problem solving can create a more effective fostering environment. In addition, this study also contributes to the literature on educational management in Islamic boarding schools by focusing on the key role of foster parents, which is often under-recognized in previous studies.

This study aims to identify and analyze how interpersonal communication and problem solving can play a role in improving the performance of foster parents in Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, this study aims to understand the various forms of effective interpersonal communication between kyai, foster parents and students, and how problem solving techniques can be applied to create a harmonious environment that supports the development of students. In addition, this study also seeks to evaluate the impact of good interpersonal communication and effective problem solving on the performance of foster parents in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in Islamic boarding schools.

The main hypothesis of this study is that effective interpersonal communication between foster parents and students, as well as the application of good problem solving, will significantly improve the performance of foster parents in carrying out their duties in Islamic boarding schools. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that a good and harmonious relationship between the foster guardian and the student will increase the motivation, discipline, and emotional well-being of the student, which in turn will make it easier for the foster guardian to carry out their role. In addition, with effective problem solving, the potential for problems that can interfere with the coaching process can be minimized, so that the foster guardian can focus on the optimal development of the student.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method conducted at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in the Ar Rumi area. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of interpersonal communication and problem solving in the specific context of pesantren. The use of this qualitative approach aims to explore the perspectives, experiences, and real practices of foster parents, students, and other related parties in depth (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023; Kaharuddin, 2021). The evidence collected included in-depth interviews with kyai, guardians, students, and pesantren administrators, participatory observations, and document analysis related to management policies and procedures at the pesantren. Thus, a qualitative approach with a case study at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in the Ar Rumi area allows researchers to comprehensively understand the dynamics of interpersonal communication and problem solving, so that they can provide relevant and applicable recommendations for improving the performance of guardians of students in the pesantren.

Table 1. Research Informant

Yes	Name	Status	Position	Code
1	K. Muhammad Fayyadh	Kyai	Deputy Director	Wd
2	Zainullah	Management	Kabag. Guardian	KBD
3	Aldin Zidan	Management	Guardian	Ws
4	Toriquil Irfani	Students	-	SNTR
5	The Wild Side of the Rainbow	Students	-	SNTR

Data analysis techniques using data reduction, data presentation, restatement, and conclusion drawing are very effective in qualitative research. This technique helps researchers simplify, understand, and infer complex data (Lubis, 2024). The first process, data reduction, involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying rough data into relevant information. Furthermore, the presentation of data compiles the information in an easy-to-understand format such as tables, graphs, or narratives. Restatement allows for clarification and interpretation of data in a clearer context. Drawing conclusions is done by identifying patterns, themes, and relationships in the data that has been simplified and presented. For example, in educational research, the use of these techniques helps to understand student behavior from classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires. By combining data reduction, data presentation, restatement, and conclusion drawn, researchers can systematically manage complex data and generate meaningful insights, improving the validity and reliability of qualitative research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Pattern Between Kyai and Guardians

In the pesantren environment, interpersonal communication between Kyai and students is in the form of two-way interaction. Kyai, as a spiritual and moral leader, is not only responsible for the teaching of religious knowledge, but also shapes the character and attitude of the students through daily interactions. This communication pattern is characterized by intensive and periodic direction, guidance, and discussions. As an educator and authoritative figure, Kyai must be able to listen, give advice, and motivate students to reach their maximum potential. On the other hand, students also play an active role in conveying input, reporting developments, and expressing their needs to Kyai. This two-way interaction not only strengthens the emotional bond between Kyai and students, but also forms a culture of constructive dialogue and supports the achievement of pesantren educational goals. The following is a flowchart that illustrates the pattern of interpersonal communication between Kyai and students.



Figure 1. Communication Patterns of Kyai and Santri

Figure 1 illustrates the pattern of interpersonal communication between Kyai and the foster guardians at the pesantren which includes several key stages that take place periodically and in a structured manner. Starting with a regular meeting between Kyai and the foster guardian which is held every Friday morning. At the meeting, the foster guardians had the opportunity to submit progress reports and problems faced in carrying out their duties. Furthermore, Kyai provided clear guidance and direction regarding reports and problems that occurred, both with a persuasive approach and a coercive approach. The persuasive approach is carried out through spiritual direction and motivation, while the coercive approach is applied under certain conditions when disorder or violations are found in the coaching. Thus, this pattern shows that through these regular meetings, there is a two-way dialogue that allows both parties to discuss, find solutions, and formulate strategic steps to increase the effectiveness of student development in Islamic boarding schools.

Based on the image above, it was found that the pattern of interpersonal communication between Kyai and the guardian at the pesantren took place periodically and in a structured manner. It started with a routine meeting every Friday morning, where their foster guardians and foster students gathered and faced Kyai. In this meeting, the guardian delivered a report on the development of students and the problems faced in coaching. Kyai listened carefully to the report. After that, Kyai provides guidance and direction with two approaches: a persuasive approach and a coercive approach. The persuasive approach includes providing constructive feedback, solutions to the problems faced, and motivation to improve the performance of the foster parent. Meanwhile, the coercive approach is used in certain situations as a form of reprimand or affirmation of the violation. This communication pattern creates a productive two-way

dialogue, allowing both parties to discuss openly, find solutions together, and formulate strategic measures to increase the effectiveness of student development. This regular communication structure and consistent guidance help ensure that problems can be effectively addressed and the process of coaching students is done better.

Problem Solving Through Interpersonal Communication Approach

In the context of fostering students in Islamic boarding schools, social dynamics between guardians, students, and kyai often cause various problems that require wise and systematic handling. Pesantren as an educational institution based on religious values is not only tasked with transferring knowledge, but also shaping the character, morality, and emotional maturity of students. Therefore, when there is a conflict or inconsistency in the coaching process, a problem solving mechanism is needed that is not only rational, but also spiritual and interpersonal. One of the most relevant and contextual approaches in the pesantren environment is through effective interpersonal communication.

Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, and effective management is essential for maintaining healthy and productive relationships. One method that has proven effective is through an interpersonal communication approach, which emphasizes open dialogue and mutual understanding. As a strategic step in resolving these various conflicts, kyai uses approaches such as mediation and counseling to facilitate dialogue between the parties to the dispute, apply the principle of collaboration to find a common solution, and accommodation to maintain good relations. With in-depth discussion sessions, spiritual reflection, and emotional training, kyai seeks to cultivate spiritual and emotional spirit and strengthen mutual respect among guardians and students.



Figure 2. Problem solving by Kyai at Islamic Boarding School

Figure 2 illustrates the problem solving strategy applied by kyai in pesantren by using an interpersonal communication approach through systematic and structured stages. The process starts from problem identification, where kyai receives reports from foster guardians or directly observes problems that occur in the pesantren environment. After that, a classification of conflicts is carried out to determine the type, whether social, emotional, or related to discipline. This classification is important to determine the most appropriate approach. The next step is planning, where the kyai devises a treatment strategy that includes mediation, counseling, or direct instruction depending on the condition at hand. At the intervention stage, kyai implements the planned strategies, including mediation as a forum for dialogue between conflicting parties and personal counseling to handle emotional and spiritual aspects. In this process, kyai combines a persuasive approach with an authoritative (coercive) approach when necessary, to ensure that the directions given can be implemented effectively. The next stage is monitoring and evaluation, where kyai monitors the progress of problem solving and evaluates the effectiveness of the interventions that have been carried out. This evaluation helps make adjustments if necessary so that the conflict resolution goal can be achieved. The end of this process is conflict resolution, which is the achievement of a mutual agreement between the relevant parties and the implementation of a final solution to maintain the harmony of the pesantren environment.

This flowchart provides a comprehensive overview of the strategic steps of problem solving by kyai based on interpersonal communication. Each stage is designed not only to resolve conflicts, but also to strengthen emotional relationships and improve the quality of social interaction in Islamic boarding schools. The problem solving strategy by kyai in pesantren is very effective in creating a harmonious and conducive environment for student development. This process begins with an in-depth identification and classification of conflicts to understand the context of the problem. Careful strategic planning is followed by interventions in the form of mediation, counseling, and providing direction both persuasively and firmly. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out on an ongoing basis to ensure the effectiveness of the strategy and adjust actions if necessary. Conflict resolution is achieved through mutual agreement that pays attention to the values of justice, compassion, and responsibility.

The Impact of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication between foster guardians and kyai plays a vital role in ensuring optimal performance of foster parents in Islamic boarding schools. Regular meetings held every week are an important forum for foster guardians to interact directly with kyai, discussing various dynamics that occur

during student development. This interaction not only enhances understanding and cooperation between the two parties, but also provides the moral support and guidance needed by the foster parent. With good communication, foster guardians become more effective in supporting the development of students, better prepared to face conflict situations, and able to resolve them according to the directions given by the kyai. Zainullah as the Head of the Guardian Section said:

"Communication between foster guardians and good guardians greatly affects the performance of foster guardians. The regular meeting which is held once a week provides an opportunity for foster guardians to communicate with kyai in every dynamic that occurs during the development of students, which in the end is able to support the development of students effectively. They are also better prepared to face conflict situations and resolve them in a way that is in accordance with the direction of the kyai" (wr.kbg.04/08)

The results of the interviews showed that effective interpersonal communication between the foster parent and kyai had a significant impact on the performance of the foster parent. Regular weekly meetings are an important platform for foster guardians to communicate directly with kyai, allowing for in-depth discussions about various dynamics that occur during the student development process. This interaction not only strengthens cooperation and understanding between guardians and kyai, but also provides the necessary guidance and support to increase the effectiveness of student development. Guardians who are involved in good communication with kyai also show higher readiness in dealing with and resolving conflict situations, in accordance with the instructions and advice given by the kyai.

Based on the results of the interview above, it was found that effective interpersonal communication between foster parents and kyai greatly influenced the performance of foster parents in Islamic boarding schools. Regular weekly meetings provide an opportunity for guardians to discuss the dynamics of student development directly with kyai, allowing for open dialogue and constructive exchange of information. The reason for the importance of this communication is because through regular interactions, guardians receive the guidance and direction needed to deal with various challenges in fostering students, improving their skills in supporting the development of students effectively. Evidence from the interviews showed that the guardians who participated in these meetings felt more supported and prepared to deal with conflict situations, as they could rely on the kyai's direction and advice to resolve the problems that arose.

Discussion

The pattern of interpersonal communication between Kyai and the foster guardians at the pesantren runs with an orderly and systematic rhythm. Regular meetings are held periodically, where the guardians submit reports on the development of the students and the problems they face in the coaching process to Kyai. Kyai listened carefully and then gave guidance and direction that were persuasive and coercive. The persuasive approach is carried out subtly and gently, so that it is able to form character and instill Islamic values (Hatami et al., 2023; Tanjung & Sampurna, 2024). In this guidance, Kyai provides constructive feedback, offers solutions to the problems faced, and provides motivation to improve the performance of foster parents. Meanwhile, in certain conditions that require firmness, Kyai can use a coercive approach by giving firm instructions or moral sanctions to maintain the quality of coaching. Through this structured communication, a two-way dialogue is created that allows both parties to collaborate in finding solutions and designing effective strategies (Hadiani et al., 2024; Harmen et al., 2024; Faiz et al., 2023). This communication structure not only facilitates efficient problem solving but also improves the quality of student development by ensuring that every issue is handled thoroughly.

The problem solving strategy by kyai in pesantren is very effective in creating a harmonious and conducive environment for student development. This process begins with the identification of conflicts, which allows kyai to understand the source and types of conflicts in depth. Careful and structured planning helps in developing effective strategies to deal with conflicts, while mediation and consultation ensure that the parties involved can dialogue openly and gain emotional support. Continuous monitoring and evaluation allows for strategy adjustments to ensure optimal outcomes. Conflict resolution achieved through mutual agreement reflects the importance of effective interpersonal communication.

According to Munthe, good interpersonal communication is key in managing conflicts and building harmonious relationships (Munthe, 2024). Kyai, who acts as a mediator and facilitator in this process, plays an important role in ensuring that all parties feel heard and understood, which is in line with the concept of empathic communication proposed by Carl Rogers (Imaniar et al., 2024; Muzni et al., 2023; Sulistira et al., 2023; Purwanto, 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023). With this approach, pesantren can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, which not only resolves conflicts but also improves the emotional and spiritual well-being of students and guardians.

Effective interpersonal communication between foster parents and kyai greatly affects the performance of foster parents in Islamic boarding schools. Regular weekly meetings provide an opportunity for guardians to discuss the

dynamics of student development directly with kyai, allowing for open dialogue and constructive exchange of information. Communication through regular interactions, guardians receive the necessary guidance and direction to deal with various challenges in fostering students, improving their skills in supporting the development of students effectively (M. A. Siregar & Winarno, 2024; Zahra & Khoiruddin, 2023; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023). Foster guardians who participated in these meetings felt more supported and prepared to face conflict situations, as they could rely on the kyai's direction and advice to resolve problems that arose (Marjuki et al., 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2024). Thus, structured and periodic interpersonal communication between foster parents and kyai not only improves the performance of foster parents but also ensures that student development runs better and effectively (Al Salamah et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The pattern of interpersonal communication between kyai and guardians in pesantren that takes place regularly and is structured is proven to be in the form of two-way interaction. Through regular meetings every Friday morning, guardians have the opportunity to submit reports on the development of students and problems faced in coaching. The problem solving strategy implemented by kyai, which involves mediation and counseling guidance, also plays an important role in creating a harmonious and productive environment. With stages ranging from conflict identification to final resolution, kyai ensures that every conflict is handled comprehensively and effectively. This effective communication not only strengthens cooperation and understanding between foster parents and parents, but also increases the readiness of foster parents in dealing with conflict situations, so that student development can be carried out better and more effectively. Through an organized communication structure and consistent guidance, pesantren are able to overcome problems effectively and support the development of students optimally. Further studies on the role of technology and media in supporting interpersonal communication in the pesantren environment can also provide valuable insights.

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