
INTEGRATING PERSUASION AND EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP: AN ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION MODEL FROM INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

***¹Muhammad Ihsan Hayatuddin, ²Elhefni, ⁴Candra Darmawan**

^{*1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

Email: ^{*1}ihsanm485@gmail.com, ²elhefni_uin@radenfatah.ac.id,

³candarmawan_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Abstract

This study is part of the discourse on Islamic communication and Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia, focusing on the construction of communication models in shaping the character of Islamic boarding school students. This study aims to formulate an integrative Islamic communication model that combines normative persuasion, leadership exemplarity, and religious culture as a moral guidance system at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School. The study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Informants were selected purposively based on their strategic roles in the educational process. Data analysis techniques used an interactive model through data reduction, data presentation, and cyclical conclusion drawing, with validity reinforced through source and method triangulation. The results show that Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools takes place systematically and relationally. Persuasion shapes the cognitive framework of values, exemplarity presents moral legitimacy through consistency of action, while religious culture reproduces values through routines and social structures. The integration of these three elements forms a mechanism for the internalization of akhlakul karimah that is cyclical and sustainable. This study produced an integrative Islamic communication model based on a cultural systemic approach as a conceptual and strategic reference in character building in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Integrative Islamic communication, Persuasion, Exemplary behavior, Islamic boarding schools, Good character

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berada dalam diskursus komunikasi Islam dan pendidikan pesantren di Indonesia dengan fokus pada konstruksi model komunikasi dalam pembentukan karakter santri. Studi ini bertujuan merumuskan model komunikasi Islam integratif yang memadukan persuasi normatif, keteladanan kepemimpinan, dan kultur religius sebagai sistem pembinaan moral di Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Informan dipilih secara purposif berdasarkan peran strategis dalam proses pendidikan. Teknik analisis data menggunakan model interaktif melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan secara siklikal, dengan keabsahan diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi Islam di pesantren berlangsung

secara sistemik dan relasional. Persuasi membentuk kerangka kognitif nilai, keteladanan menghadirkan legitimasi moral melalui konsistensi tindakan, sedangkan kultur religius mereproduksi nilai melalui rutinitas dan struktur sosial. Integrasi ketiganya membentuk mekanisme internalisasi akhlakul karimah yang bersifat siklikal dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model komunikasi Islam integratif berbasis pendekatan sistemik kultural sebagai rujukan konseptual dan strategis dalam pembinaan karakter di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata kunci: *Komunikasi Islam integrative, Persuasi, Keteladanan, Pesantren, Akhlakul karimah*

INTRODUCTION

The study of Islamic communication in the last decade has shown significant developments, both in theoretical perspective and institutional practice. Islamic communication is no longer understood merely as verbal *da'wah* (proselytizing) activities, but as a system of interaction involving rhetorical, symbolic, cultural, and performative dimensions in shaping the consciousness and character of the *ummah* (community) (Sauri et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic education, communication is the main medium for internalizing values, especially in institutions based on religious communities such as Islamic boarding schools (Karim et al., 2025). Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have a distinctive character that combines formal learning, ritual practices, and an authoritative relationship between the *kiai* (religious teacher) and the *santri* (student) (Anggraeni & Shobirin, 2023). This relationship is not merely pedagogical, but also moral and spiritual, forming a unique communication structure (Alfiyanto et al., 2022; Mujtabarizza & Musyarafah, 2023).

Recent developments show that character building in Islamic education cannot rely solely on normative curricula. A number of recent studies emphasize the importance of the hidden curriculum, institutional culture, and leadership role models as determining factors in character building (Shodikin et al., 2023). In this context, Islamic communication functions as a mechanism for transmitting values through persuasion, advice, dialogue, symbols, and especially role models (Radlinski & Craswell, 2017; Wu et al., 2021). The integration of verbal messages and actual behavior determines the effectiveness of moral guidance. Thus, Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools can be understood as a system that unites rhetorical (*bil-lisan*) and performative (*bil-hal*) aspects (Saif et al., 2024).

Normatively (*das sollen*), Islamic boarding schools are idealized as centers for the formation of *akhlakul karimah* through the example set by the *kiai*, collective discipline, and a conducive religious environment. Values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect for teachers are believed to grow through intensive interaction in boarding school life (Irfani et al., 2025; Mau, 2024; Sudrajat et al., 2024). However, empirically (*das sein*), the effectiveness of this guidance is highly dependent on the quality of communication that is built in daily life (Park, 2022). The challenges of modernity, changes in generational character, and the influence of digital media also affect the patterns of interaction in the *pesantren* environment. Not all moral messages conveyed verbally are

automatically internalized without the example and consistent behavior of authoritative figures (Zhang et al., 2023).

Initial research data at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School shows that there is complex communication dynamics in the process of fostering students. Initial observations show that formal education activities, recitation of the Qur'an, and worship practices are carried out intensively. The effectiveness of character building is more apparent in moments of informal interaction, such as personal dialogues between clerics and students, daily disciplinary practices, and direct responses to rule violations. Preliminary interviews with several students reveal that the *kiai*'s advice becomes more meaningful when accompanied by concrete examples in their daily attitudes and behavior. Students state that the consistency of the *kiai* and *ustadz*'s actions reinforces the legitimacy of the moral messages conveyed. These initial findings indicate that verbal persuasion and leadership examples work simultaneously in shaping moral awareness. Although these communication practices occur naturally, there is no conceptual formulation that systematically explains the integration of persuasion and exemplary behavior as a model of Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools. Some practices are still understood as traditions or customs, rather than as communication systems that can be analyzed scientifically and replicated in other contexts. This is where the academic need arises to formulate an integrative and contextual model of Islamic communication.

Research on communication and *pesantren* education shows diverse trends. In the 2015–2017 period, studies focused more on *kiai-santri* interpersonal communication and the effectiveness of lecture methods in character building. In 2018–2019, the focus of research shifted to *kiai* leadership as the center of *pesantren* organizational culture and its influence on *santri* character. In the period 2020–2021, attention turned to persuasive communication and moral development strategies in facing the challenges of the digital age. In 2022–2023, several studies began to integrate a communication approach with an analysis of *pesantren* culture and character building. Meanwhile, recent studies in 2024 show a tendency toward value analysis and the internalization of religious culture in the Islamic education system (Faruk et al., 2022; Utomo et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2021).

However, most of these studies are still partial. Studies of persuasive communication are rarely systematically linked to leadership role models. Research on *kiai* leadership emphasizes managerial or charismatic aspects, rather than the construction of communication as a character-building system. Similarly, studies on the formation of *akhlakul karimah* often focus on habituation methods without in-depth analysis of the underlying communication structure. This gap shows that there is no Islamic communication model that explicitly integrates persuasion and exemplary leadership into a conceptual framework based on Indonesian *pesantren* practices (Zulkifli & Wirdanengsih, 2020).

Based on this gap, this study argues that Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood in a fragmented manner. Persuasion as a rhetorical and

psychological process must be combined with leadership exemplarity as a performative and symbolic process. The integration of the two forms a communication system that not only conveys moral messages but also presents concrete examples that reinforce the legitimacy of values. Thus, the formation of *akhlakul karimah* is not merely the result of normative instructions but of continuous interaction between messages, behavior, and religious culture. This study aims to formulate an integrative Islamic communication model based on persuasion and leadership exemplarity at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic communication studies by offering a contextual model construction based on field reality. Practically, this research provides a reference for Islamic educational institutions in designing more systemic and sustainable character building strategies.

The novelty of this research lies in the synthesis of persuasion theory, leadership role model theory, and Islamic communication practices into one integrative model. While previous studies discussed these variables separately, this study formulates them as a mutually reinforcing communication system in the process of value internalization. Thus, this research not only describes the phenomenon of communication in Islamic boarding schools but also constructs a model that has theoretical and practical relevance in the field of Islamic communication and Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia. This study develops a conceptual proposition that the integration of persuasion and exemplary leadership in the religious environment of Islamic boarding schools forms an effective pattern of Islamic communication in the internalization of *akhlakul karimah* values. This proposition forms the basis of analysis in formulating an integrative and contextual model of Islamic communication.

METHOD

This research is field research that aims to formulate an integrative Islamic communication model based on persuasion and leadership exemplarity at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School. The research uses a qualitative approach with empirical and descriptive-constructive characteristics, as it seeks to deeply understand the communication practices that take place in the social and religious context of the pesantren and formulate a model construction based on field findings (Radlinski & Craswell, 2017). This approach was chosen to capture the dynamics of interaction between kiai, ustadz, and santri in the character-building process, which cannot be measured quantitatively.

The research was conducted at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School during the period from July to December 2025. This location was chosen because it has a student development system that emphasizes the integration of formal learning and religious habits in daily life. The research subjects were determined purposively by considering their strategic roles in the educational process, namely the pesantren leaders (kiai), several ustadz who were directly involved in coaching, and santri who actively participated in educational and habit-forming activities (Yang & Zhang, 2023). The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained

through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of pesantren activities, while secondary data came from institutional documents, curricula, pesantren rules and regulations, and literature relevant to Islamic communication and leadership.

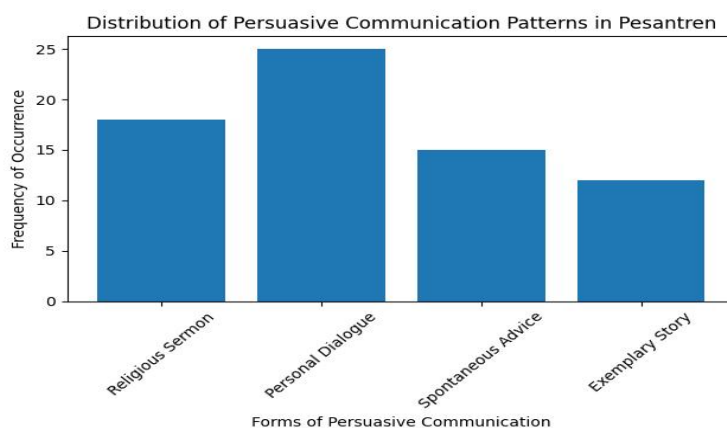
Data collection techniques were carried out through semi-structured interviews to explore the views of kiai and ustadz regarding communication strategies and role models, participatory observation of learning activities, recitation, and daily activities of santri, as well as documentary studies of rules and coaching programs (Guest et al., 2006). The collected data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Birt et al., 2016). The analysis process was carried out continuously from data collection to the final stage of the research to find patterns of communication, relationships between elements of persuasion and exemplary behavior, and the construction of an integrated Islamic communication model. Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation, as well as confirmation of findings with key informants to ensure that the interpretation was consistent with the reality in the field (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Persuasive Communication Patterns in the Development of Students at Islamic Boarding Schools

Field findings at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic boarding school show that persuasive communication is not merely a technique for conveying moral messages, but rather a social mechanism that is institutionalized in the culture of Islamic boarding schools. Persuasion does not take place as a separate communicative event, but as an interactional process that is integrated into the structure of daily life. From a social communication perspective, this condition shows that moral messages operate within what is known as *an embedded communication system*, namely a communication system that is integrated into the social practices of the community. Based on field observations and in-depth interviews, four main forms of persuasive communication were identified: religious lectures, personal dialogues, spontaneous advice, and exemplary stories. The distribution of occurrences shows that personal dialogues are the most dominant form.

Figure 1. Distribution of Persuasive Communication Patterns in Islamic Boarding Schools



The dominance of personal dialogue can theoretically be explained through an interpersonal communication approach that emphasizes the importance of relational closeness in attitude change. Aristotle's classical theory of persuasion asserts that the effectiveness of communication is determined by three main elements: *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotional closeness), and *logos* (rational argumentation) (Haleem et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, personal dialogue strengthens the dimensions of *ethos* and *pathos*, while religious lectures reinforce *logos* through the legitimacy of arguments. This finding is also in line with the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* theory, which explains that attitude change is more lasting when individuals process messages through the central route, namely through reflection and personal involvement (Ufua et al., 2020). Personal dialogue provides space for such reflection. Students do not simply receive messages, but are invited to interpret and internalize them through two-way conversation. This process strengthens cognitive elaboration while building a more stable moral commitment.

Interviews with students showed that they felt "heard" and valued when invited to engage in direct dialogue. This experience demonstrates the presence of empathic communication, which in relational communication theory is referred to as *a supportive communication climate* (Faruk et al., 2022). A supportive communication climate increases message acceptance and reduces psychological resistance. Thus, persuasion in Islamic boarding schools works not through normative pressure, but through relationship-based internalization. Religious lectures continue to play a strategic role as a normative foundation. From a da'wah communication perspective, lectures serve as an articulation of text-based values (*dalil*). They provide a theological framework that legitimizes behavioral norms. As stated in various contemporary Islamic education studies, the transmission of values based on lectures alone tends to result in cognitive compliance without affective depth if it is not supported by interpersonal relationships and role models (Usmani, 2024). Findings in Islamic boarding schools confirm that lectures are the normative entry point, while personal dialogue is the space for internalization.

Spontaneous advice and exemplary stories have a strong symbolic dimension. In Albert Bandura's social learning theory, human behavior is greatly influenced by the process of *observational learning* (Bandura, 2001). Exemplary stories, especially those derived from the real experiences of religious leaders, serve as a medium for moral modeling. When students witness or hear about the concrete experiences of figures they respect, a process of identification occurs. This identification accelerates the imitation of behavior. Although the frequency is lower, the impact is profound because it touches on the imaginative and emotional dimensions. The credibility of the communicator is a central factor. Within the framework of transformational leadership theory, *idealized influence* arises when leaders possess integrity and moral consistency (Ghosh & Mitra, 2022). In Islamic boarding schools, the authority of the kiai is not merely structural, but also moral symbolic authority. Daily integrity strengthens persuasive power. This is in line with research on leadership in

Islamic boarding schools over the past decade, which confirms that moral legitimacy is more effective than formal control in character building.

The effectiveness of persuasion in Islamic boarding schools is reinforced by a consistent religious culture. From an educational sociology perspective, the environment functions as *a hidden curriculum* that shapes habitus (Agung et al., 2024). The routine of congregational worship, collective discipline, and intense interaction throughout the day form a structure of experience that reproduces values repeatedly. Values are not only spoken, but experienced. This is what distinguishes communication in Islamic boarding schools from moral communication in formal classrooms, which is temporary in nature. Persuasive communication at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School can be understood as a relational communication system based on moral credibility and supported by a stable religious ecosystem. Its distinctive feature lies in the integration of normative arguments, interpersonal closeness, behavioral modeling, and cultural reproduction. This finding expands the study of Islamic communication by showing that the effectiveness of persuasion does not only depend on rhetorical power, but also on the consistency of figures and the strength of the social structures that support them. This analysis also serves as the conceptual foundation for the integration of persuasion and exemplary behavior in the integrative Islamic communication model. Persuasion functions as an articulation of values, while exemplary behavior and religious culture ensure its legitimacy and sustainability. Thus, communication in Islamic boarding schools not only conveys values, but also builds a social system that allows those values to live and be reproduced sustainably.

The Exemplary Leadership of the Kiai as Performative Communication

The results of research at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic boarding school show that the exemplary leadership of the kiai cannot be understood merely as a personal attribute or individual quality. Exemplary leadership functions as a performative communication mechanism that systematically shapes the culture of the boarding school and the collective consciousness of the students. While persuasion was understood in the previous section as a verbal and dialogical strategy, in this section exemplary leadership appears as a practical dimension that gives legitimacy and transformative power to these normative messages. Based on the results of a questionnaire administered to 78 students and triangulation through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, the students' perceptions of the dimensions of exemplary leadership are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Perception of Leadership Exemplarity Dimensions

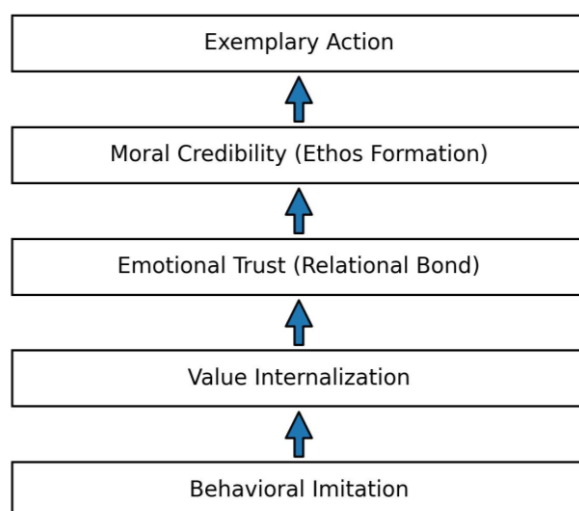
DIMENSION OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP	PERCENTAGE
CONSISTENCY BETWEEN SPEECH AND ACTION	87
DISCIPLINE AND PUNCTUALITY	82
SIMPLICITY OF LIFESTYLE	76
EMOTIONAL APPROACHABILITY	84
FAIRNESS IN DECISION-MAKING	79

The data shows that consistency between words and actions ranks highest (87%). This finding is significant theoretically, in the perspective of Aristotle's classical rhetoric, the credibility of the communicator (*ethos*) is the most decisive element in the effectiveness of persuasion. Practical consistency builds an authentic *ethos*, not just a symbolic image. When the moral message conveyed is in harmony with actual actions, the message is no longer perceived as an external normative demand, but as a representation of living values.

This finding is also consistent with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the dimension of *idealized influence* (Wahida et al., 2022). Leaders who demonstrate integrity and moral consistency generate loyalty based on respect, not merely structural obedience. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, *kiai* are not only administrative figures, but also sources of moral legitimacy. Their authority is moral symbolic authority, which works through daily integrity. Analysis shows that communication in Islamic boarding schools occurs on two levels: the declarative level (what is said) and the performative level (what is done). This concept can be explained through *speech act* theory, which distinguishes between utterances as statements and utterances as actions (Falah et al., 2023). In the leadership of the *kiai*, everyday actions such as being present on time for congregational prayers or responding calmly to violations are forms of communication that have strong illocutionary and perlocutionary force. These actions convey moral messages without the need for repeated verbalization.

Field observations show that exemplary behavior is reflected in daily routines: punctuality, simplicity of lifestyle, and direct involvement in *santri* activities. From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of education, these practices form a collective *habitus*. Values are not only learned cognitively, but are internalized through the repetition of practices that shape behavioral dispositions. The relationship between exemplary behavior and the internalization of values can be explained through the following model:

Figure 2. Mechanism of Performative Islamic Leadership Communication



The model explains that exemplary actions generate moral credibility, which in turn fosters emotional trust. In the *pesantren* environment, characterized by intensive interaction and long-term relationships, trust becomes the foundation for the internalization of values. This process is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which asserts that individuals learn through observation and modeling (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). *Santri* imitate behavior not because of structural pressure, but because of moral identification with respected figures. Further analysis shows that role models function as *a soft control mechanism*. Unlike formal control based on sanctions, this mechanism works through the internalization of norms. Students adjust their behavior not because they fear punishment, but because of a moral impulse to conform to the role model. In social control theory, emotional bonds with authority figures strengthen commitment to norms (Afif, 2024; Matlani & Fathorrahman, 2023).

The role of the *ustadz* as a companion figure broadens the spectrum of this performative communication. If the *kiai* functions as a symbolic center of values, then the *ustadz* becomes a mediator of praxis in everyday life. Intensive interaction in the dormitory creates layers of exemplary behavior. This structure produces a sustainable collective communication system, in which values are reproduced through both horizontal and vertical relationships. This finding confirms that Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools cannot be reduced to mere rhetoric. It is an integration of verbal persuasion and practical exemplarity within a religious ecosystem. Exemplarity is a prerequisite for the legitimacy of persuasion; without moral integrity, persuasion loses its transformative power. Conversely, persuasion provides a normative articulation of exemplary actions so that values have a clear theological orientation. Thus, the leadership of the *kiai* at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic boarding school can be categorized as a performative Islamic communication model of leadership that combines moral integrity, emotional relationships, and consistency of action as the main medium for transmitting values. This model not only explains local practices but also offers conceptual contributions to the development of Islamic communication theory and the study of religious culture based educational leadership.

Integration of Persuasion and Exemplary Behavior in the Islamic Communication Model of Islamic Boarding Schools

The findings of this study indicate that persuasion and exemplary behavior do not function as two separate mechanisms, but rather form an integrated and mutually reinforcing communication system. If persuasion functions as the normative articulation of values through language, then exemplary behavior becomes the practical verification of those values. The relationship between the two is dialectical: messages provide normative direction, while actions provide moral legitimacy. This integration results in a continuous and transformative communication cycle within the *pesantren* culture.

A synthesis of questionnaire data, interviews, and observations shows that this integration can be mapped in the following model:

Figure 3. Integrated Islamic Communication Model in Pesantren



The model shows that Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools does not stop at conveying normative messages. Messages conveyed through lectures or advice are deepened through interpersonal dialogue, resulting in a process of cognitive and affective elaboration. This stage is in line with the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* theory, which explains that lasting attitude change occurs when individuals are reflectively involved in processing messages (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Ramadhan & Sadat, 2024). The next stage is the practice of exemplary leadership. When students witness the harmony between the values taught and the actual actions of the kiai or ustadz, moral legitimacy is formed. In Aristotle's rhetorical theory, this legitimacy strengthens the *ethos* dimension, which is the foundation of effective persuasion. Meanwhile, in the framework of transformational leadership, this stage reflects *idealized influence*, which is the leader's ability to influence through moral integrity (Wekke, 2015).

This moral legitimacy becomes the gateway to the internalization of values. This internalization process can be explained through Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals adopt values and behaviors through observation of significant figures. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, intensive relationships and emotional closeness accelerate this modeling process (Alfawzan et al., 2024). When values have been internalized, they do not stop at the individual level but contribute to the formation of a collective religious culture. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus is relevant to explain how repeated practices shape collective dispositions (Kollar et al., 2026). Structured worship schedules, daily discipline, and intensive interaction create a structure of experience that systematically reproduces values. The culture that is formed then reinforces the effectiveness of subsequent persuasion. Thus, this system is cyclical and reproductive. Analytically, this model exhibits three main characteristics.

First, integrative character. Persuasion and exemplary behavior are not two separate approaches. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, persuasion without exemplary behavior will lose credibility, while exemplary behavior without normative articulation risks losing its value orientation. The integration of the two creates communication that is morally and practically coherent. *Second*, relational character. The survey data shows that 84% of santri find it easier to accept values when their relationship with their caregivers is personal and open. This finding reinforces relational communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of *a supportive communication climate*. The internalization of values is not merely a cognitive process, but also an affective one. Emotional trust becomes a medium for moral transformation.

Third, cultural characteristics. Values are not only instilled at the individual level, but also institutionalized within social structures. From an educational sociology perspective, this shows that communication functions as *a cultural reproduction mechanism*. Communication is no longer event-based, but rather a system that is integrated into the rhythm of life at the pesantren. The identified model of Islamic communication expands on the conventional approach to da'wah, which tends to emphasize verbal rhetoric. This study shows that Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools operates on three levels simultaneously: verbal (normative persuasion), performative (practical exemplarity), and structural (religious culture). These three levels support each other in shaping sustainable moral transformation. Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood as merely rhetorical activities, but rather as a social-religious system that integrates language, actions, and institutional structures. This integration forms the conceptual foundation for the integrative Islamic communication model formulated in this study.

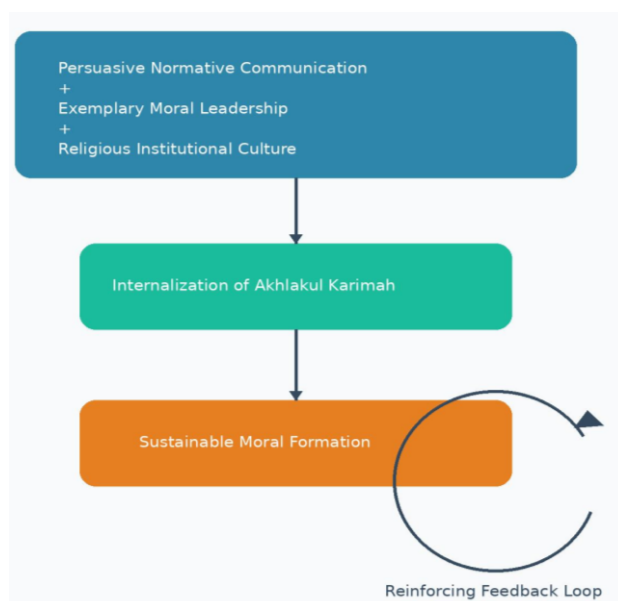
Formulation of an Integrative Islamic Communication Model in Islamic Boarding Schools

The communication process at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School shows a pattern that is neither linear nor one way. It moves in a relational configuration of that brings together three main elements: normative persuasion, performative exemplarity, and structural religious culture. These three elements do not stand as separate variables, but as nodes in a mutually reinforcing system. Normative persuasion is conveyed through personal dialogues between clerics and students, regular lectures, reflective advice after congregational prayers, and informal conversations rich in meaning. Here, Islamic values are articulated cognitively; students are encouraged to understand the moral reasons behind certain behaviors because understanding alone is not considered sufficient. The exemplary behavior of clerics and teachers serves as a medium for practical verification of these values. Consistency between words and actions provides moral legitimacy that makes the message feel authentic and trustworthy, rather than merely normative.

The religious culture of Islamic boarding schools, reflected in the routine of congregational worship, time discipline, the cultivation of manners, and intense social interaction in the dormitories, becomes a space for the continuous reproduction of values. Values that have

been understood and witnessed in practice are then institutionalized through the structure of daily life. In this context, Islamic boarding schools are not only places for the transmission of teachings, but also ecosystems for character building. These three elements form an inseparable relationship. Persuasion without exemplary behavior risks producing fragile and easily faded formal compliance. Exemplary behavior without normative articulation can lose its ideological direction. Meanwhile, without religious cultural support, the internalization of values is difficult to sustain in the long term. The effectiveness of Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools lies precisely in the simultaneous integration of these three elements into a single religious social system.

Figure 4. Conceptual Model of Sustainable Moral Formation



This visualization confirms that the formation of *akhlakul karimah* is the result of systemic interactions between verbal communication, leadership practices, and religious social structures. The feedback loop indicates that when values have been internalized, they do not stop at the individual level, but reinforce the collective religious culture. A stronger culture, in turn, increases the effectiveness of subsequent persuasion. This process is cyclical, reproductive, and continuously renewed in the dynamics of pesantren life. Conceptually, this model has three main characteristics. *First*, structural integrative character. This model integrates verbal (persuasion), performative (exemplary behavior), and institutional (religious culture) dimensions into a single, comprehensive communication framework. No single element is dominant; its strength lies in its integration.

Second, moral legitimacy. Exemplarity serves as a source of credibility (ethos) that strengthens persuasive power. Moral legitimacy is not built solely through structural authority, but through practical integrity witnessed directly by students. *Third*, cultural reproductive characteristics. The pesantren system has the ability to reproduce values collectively through routines, religious symbols, and intensive social interaction. Values are not only taught, but also lived and repeated in daily practice. The advantage of this

model over previous studies lies in its holistic approach. Many studies separate da'wah communication, kiai leadership, and pesantren culture as different domains. This study shows that sustainable moral transformation actually arises from the integration of these three elements into a single social-religious system. Thus, this model not only explains how communication takes place, but also how values are legitimized, institutionalized, and reproduced.

This model expands the paradigm of Islamic communication from a linear approach to a systemic relational approach. Communication is not understood as the transfer of messages from the communicator to the recipient, but rather as a dynamic process that exists within a network of relationships, symbolic practices, and specific social structures. This perspective enriches the study of Islamic communication by incorporating institutional and cultural dimensions as an integral part of the communication process. This model also provides strategic direction for Islamic educational institutions. Character building cannot rely solely on normative curricula or moral lectures. It requires consistency in the role models set by educators and the strengthening of a religious culture that supports the continuous internalization of values. Character education reform must be directed towards the development of an integrative communication system, rather than fragmented, partial interventions. This formulation of an integrative Islamic communication model emphasizes that the development of *akhlakul karimah* (*good character*) in Islamic boarding schools is not the result of a single intervention, but rather the result of orchestrated communication that unites words, actions, and social systems into a single, sustainable transformative mechanism. This is where the strength of Islamic boarding schools lies: in their ability to make communication the foundation for the development of a living, collective morality that is continuously reproduced across generations.

CONCLUSION

The formation of *akhlakul karimah* at the Raudhatul Qur'an Payaraman Islamic Boarding School takes place through an integrative Islamic communication model that combines normative persuasion, performative exemplarity, and structural religious culture in a mutually reinforcing system. The research objective to formulate a communication model that explains the mechanism of value internalization was achieved through the finding that the effectiveness of moral guidance is not determined by rhetorical power alone, but by the integration of verbal messages, the moral legitimacy of leaders, and institutional support. Islamic communication in Islamic boarding schools works systemically and reproducibly, where exemplary behavior becomes a source of credibility that strengthens persuasion, while religious culture ensures the sustainability of values in collective life. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a conceptual model that simultaneously connects verbal, performative, and structural dimensions, thereby enriching the development of Islamic communication theory and religious culture-based education studies.

This study recommends that Islamic educational institutions develop an integrated character building system between the values curriculum, consistency in the role models

of educators, and the strengthening of institutional religious culture. Academically, this model can be further tested in the context of Islamic boarding schools with different typologies or compared with other Islamic educational institutions to expand its conceptual validity. In terms of policy, the strengthening of character education in Islamic boarding schools needs to be directed not only at regulatory aspects but also at building moral integrity and a religious ecosystem that supports the continuous internalization of values.

REFERENCES

- Afif, A. (2024). Enhancing Alumni Participatory Communication for Pesantren's Economic Development: A Conceptual Approach. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Communication*, 7(1), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.35719/ijic.v7i1.2146>
- Alfawzan, A., Tamvada, J. P., Aldhehayan, A., Temouri, Y., & Pereira, V. (2024). The Impact of Islamic Religiosity on Innovation Propensity. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 207, 123598. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123598>
- Alfiyanto, A., Hidayati, F., & Ilma, R. (2022). Implementation of Counseling Guidance in Shaping Students' Spiritual Intelligence at YPI Tunas Bangsa Palembang High School. *International Conference on Islamic Guidance and Counseling*, 2. <https://vicon.uin-suka.ac.id/index.php/icigc/article/view/701>
- Anggraeni, M. N., & Shobirin, M. S. (2023). The Role of Kyai Leadership in Shaping the Spirit of Independence and Entrepreneurship in Santri. *ISLAMIKA*. <https://ejournal.stitpn.ac.id/index.php/islamika/article/view/4172>
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265–299. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Falah, M. R. F., Baharun, H., Wibowo, A., & Kumala, S. A. (2023). Communication in Pesantren Educational Institutions: The Application of Social Cognitive Theory in Understanding Social Interaction in the Pesantren Environment. *Mapendis: Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 1(2). <https://jurnal.staiannawawi.com/index.php/Mapendis/article/view/732>
- Faruk, A. A., Suherman, D., Mudrikah, A., & Mulyanto, A. (2022). Management of Character Education to Improve the Quality of Education in Islamic Boarding Schools (Qualitative Study at Cipasung Islamic Boarding School and KH Zaenal Mustofa Sukamanah Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya Regency). *International Journal of*

Educational Research & Social Sciences, 3(5), 1851–1861.
<https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v3i5.482>

Gede Agung, D. A., Nasih, A. M., Sumarmi, Idris, & Kurniawan, B. (2024). Local Wisdom as a Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 9, 100827.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827>

Ghosh, S., & Mitra, A. (2022). Ethnic Identities, Public Spending and Political Regimes. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 50(1), 256–279.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2021.09.003>

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>

Haleem, A., Javaid, M., & Singh, R. P. (2024). Role of Leadership 4.0 in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution: A Comprehensive View. *Journal of Industrial Safety*, 1(1), 100006. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinse.2024.100006>

Ibrahim, M. A., Abdullah, A., Ismail, I. A., & Asimiran, S. (2024). Leadership at the Helm: Essential Skills and Knowledge for Effective Management in Islamic Economics and Finance Schools. *Heliyon*, 10(17), e36696. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36696>

Irfani, F., Makbula, M. H., Fariduddin, E. I., & Aly, M. R. D. F. (2025). Moral Education in Malaysian Islamic Boarding Schools: Challenges Faced by Educators in Nurturing Ethical Imitation. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(4), 618–634.
<https://doi.org/10.31538/MUNADDHOMAH.V6I4.1967>

Karim, A., Fathurohman, O., Sulaiman, S., Marliani, L., Muhammadun, M., & Firmansyah, B. (2025). How do principals act as leaders and managers in boarding and public schools in Indonesia? *Cogent Education*, 12(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2445354>

Kollar, R., Geurts, N., & Spierings, N. (2026). From Islamic Religiosity to Political Participation: The Role of Social Exclusion and Origin-Country Ties. *Social Science Research*, 134, 103295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2025.103295>

Matlani, & Fathorrahman. (2023). Communication of Kiai in Collective Leadership at Annuqayah Guluk-Guluk, Sumenep. *Kariman: Journal of Islamic Education*, 11(2), 283–297. <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v11i2.349>

Mau, F. A. (2024). Integrating Character Education in Al-Syifa Islamic Boarding Schools: A Case Study Approach. *Edu Spectrum: Journal of Multidimensional Education*, 1(1), 01–14. <https://doi.org/10.70063/EDUSPECTRUM.V1I1.30>

Mujtabarrizza, M., & Musyarafah, M. (2023). Assessing the Role of Kyai Leadership in Santri Development. *Atthiflah: Journal of Early Childhood Islamic Education*, 10(1), 80–89. <https://doi.org/10.54069/atthiflah.v10i1.317>

- Park, S. (2022). Gendered Leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic: How Democracy and Representation Moderate Leadership Effectiveness. *Public Management Review*, 24(11), 1802–1823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2021.1937294>
- Radlinski, F., & Craswell, N. (2017). A Theoretical Framework for Conversational Search. *Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Conference Human Information Interaction and Retrieval, CHIIR '17*, 117–126. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3020165.3020183>
- Ramadhan, M. A., & Sadat, F. A. (2024). Organisational Communication in Islamic Education: A Case Study of Madrasah Aliyah Salafiyah Cirebon. *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education*, 4(1), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.14421/hjie.2024.41-03>
- Saif, N., Amelia, Goh, G. G. G., Rubin, A., Shaheen, I., & Murtaza, M. (2024). Influence of Transformational Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior and Task Performance of Individuals: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing. *Heliyon*, 10(11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32280>
- Sauri, S., Gunara, S., & Cipta, F. (2022). Establishing the Identity of Insan Kamil Generation through Music Learning Activities in Pesantren. *Heliyon*, 8(7), e09958. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09958>
- Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and Social Cognitive Theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 60, 101832. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101832>
- Shodikin, G. F., Fawaid, A., & Sholeh, L. (2023). An Analysis of Kyai's Charisma and Leadership in The Marketing of Islamic Boarding School Institutions. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(1), 642–650. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v5i1.4629>
- Sudrajat, S., Wijayanti, A. T., & Jha, G. K. (2024). Inculcating Honesty Values in Boarding School: Study in Muhammadiyah Boarding School Yogyakarta. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(1), 317–327. <https://doi.org/10.35445/ALISHLAH.V16I1.4501>
- Ufua, D. E., Salau, O. P., Ikpefan, O., Dirisu, J. I., & Okoh, E. E. (2020). Addressing Operational Complexities through Re-Inventing Leadership Style: A Systemic Leadership Intervention. *Heliyon*, 6(7). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04270>
- Usmani, S. (2024). Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing: The Role of Islamic Work Ethic in the Islamic Banking Industry of Pakistan. *Heliyon*, 10(18), e37032. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37032>
- Utomo, S., Fauzan, M., & Anshori, A. (2020). Pesantren's Kyai and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority in a Muslim Peripheral Territory. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Engineering, Technology and Social Science (ICONETOS)*, 56–59. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201113.011>
- Wahida, N., Lestiono, A., Sari, D. P., & al, et. (2022). Integration of Religious Morals in Character Education at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pondok Pesantren Tri Bhakti At-Taqwa

in East Lampung, Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Islamic Studies*, 1(2), 216–235. <https://doi.org/10.51214/biis.v1i2.1425>

Wekke, I. S. (2015). Arabic Teaching and Learning: A Model from Indonesian Muslim Minority. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 286–290. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.236>

Wu, Y. L., Shao, B., Newman, A., & Schwarz, G. (2021). Crisis Leadership: A Review and Future Research Agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(6), 101518. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101518>

Yang, L. (Francoise), & Zhang, L. J. (2023). Self-regulation and student engagement with feedback: The case of Chinese EFL student writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 63, 101226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2023.101226>

Zhang, H., Wu, J., Wen, J., & Douglas, D. (2023). Ethical leadership in multinational companies' control practices: culture as a moderating factor. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 31(6), 2183–2208. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-10-2021-2998>

Zulkifli, Z., & Wirdanengsih, W. (2020). Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler Tahfiz di SMA Negeri 5 Padang. *Jurnal Sikola: Jurnal Kajian* <http://sikola.ppj.unp.ac.id/index.php/sikola/article/view/23>