

Research Article

Communication Strategies of the *Madrasah* Principal in Improving the Quality of Educational Institutions: A Case Study at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri

Aina Ainaul Mardiyah ^{1*}, Ahmad Tanzeh ², Binti Maunah ³¹⁻³ Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, IndonesiaEmail: ainatribakti@gmail.com* Corresponding Author : ainatribakti@gmail.com

Abstract. The dynamics of the development of Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Al Hikmah cannot be separated from the role of the principal's communication. Analogous to the human body, communication functions as blood that must flow to all parts. This constitutes one of the foundations for quality development. The communication strategy of the principal of MTs Al Hikmah in quality development exhibits distinctive characteristics. The principal is able to establish highly effective communication despite not having an educational background in communication studies. The principal employs prophetic-based communication strategy to enhance institutional quality. This study is qualitative research employing a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through interviews with the principal, foundation caretakers or administrators, teachers, parents or students, and stakeholders. In addition, interview data were systematically dialogued with documents and observations. After data collection, the data were analyzed using prophetic and quality-based approaches. The analytical process involved data condensation and triangulation to ensure the scientific accountability of the findings. The communication implemented operates effectively according to its roles as persuasive, informative, collective-regulative, and integrative, with a linear pattern through channels of direction, instruction, and task assignment aligned with institutional objectives. (b) The direction of the communication strategy is predominantly top-down rather than bottom-up within formal school contexts, guided by ethics of liberation, humanization, and decentralization. Diagonal communication is conducted with several informants, such as vice principals for curriculum, student affairs, and facilities and infrastructure, through various communication platforms. Interpersonal communication is also well established, with a strong emphasis on motivating subordinates from multiple perspectives.

Received: January 16, 2026

Revised: January 26, 2026

Accepted: Februari 11, 2026

Online Available: Februari 14, 2026

Curr. Ver.: Februari 14, 2026

Keywords: Communication of the *Madrasah* Principal; Communication Models; Educational Quality Development; Quality Development; Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTs).

1. INTRODUCTION

Every educational institution shares a similar awareness; however, not all institutional managers implement it in practice. Each *madrasah* principal possesses an awareness of managing the institution by maximizing the role of communication. The importance of communication for leadership has been examined in a study conducted by Ibnu Chalis Maulana on leadership in increasing market interest at MTs Al Khoiriyah Semarang. The findings indicate that communication strategies are among the key factors in enhancing public trust within the local community. Accordingly, the study recommends that leaders should possess competence in communication strategy. The depth of such competence can be observed in the extent to which an institution's existence and reputation are recognized by the wider public.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

One of the components in improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions is the implementation of effective communication strategies. A leader must possess sound communication strategies to enhance institutional quality. This aspect, however, is not widely recognized by institutional leaders, despite extensive theoretical evidence supporting its importance. Interestingly, the leader of Pesantren Al Hikmah, rather than neglecting communication strategies, employs a cognitive approach when communicating with subordinates. As a result, subordinates are able to understand and effectively carry out the instructions given by the leader.

According to Yukl, as cited by Pidarta (2011), in leadership a leader must be able to influence others so that those being influenced are willing to cooperate effectively in accordance with the leader's expectations within an institution or organization. In *madrasah* institutions, the role of the *madrasah* principal serves as the frontline manager within a decentralized school system at the district level. The *madrasah* principal acts as the central authority in the educational institution. As a top manager, the principal plays a decisive role in determining the progress or decline of a school and is also entitled to function as a supervisor.

The *madrasah* principal bears both direct and indirect responsibility for the learning process within the school. The principal must possess the readiness and capacity to foster subordinates' work motivation, particularly with regard to teachers' performance in the classroom teaching and learning process. Arpah (2017) states in her research that the role of teachers cannot be replaced by any form of media; therefore, their presence as the frontline of instruction must be maintained. Consequently, the *madrasah* principal must assume a direct role in leading, directing, formulating policies to be implemented, and controlling the educational processes carried out within the institution. From this perspective, it can be understood that one of the principal duties of a *madrasah* principal is to improve the quality of learning in schools, as part of their roles and responsibilities as an educational leader (Handayani & Rasyid, 2015).

One of the efforts undertaken by *madrasah* principals to develop quality within *madrasah* institutions is communication. More broadly, in the field of education, communication is considered essential because it serves as a medium that facilitates the smooth and effective implementation of educational processes. Communication within educational institutions is a crucial factor in supporting the establishment of positive relationships among education providers, thereby enabling the achievement of educational goals as formulated in the national education objectives (Azizah, N., Murgiyanto, M., & Nugroho, R. 2019).

Communication constitutes an integral part of management possessed by a leader in directing and controlling subordinates; effective communication generates positive impacts, whereas poor communication results in negative consequences (Sagala, 2017). Human beings cannot be separated from communication. Communication is a crucial act that functions as a fundamental tool for interaction among individuals (Asiah, 2017). Moreover, communication is not limited to humans alone; other living creatures also possess specific forms of

communication among themselves, such as ants, chickens, and other species, each communicating in ways that correspond to their respective habitats (Hafied Cangara, 2011).

Improving the quality of education does not focus on a single aspect alone but encompasses all aspects related to the educational process, ranging from inputs, processes, to outputs. One of the key indicators of such improvement lies in the enhancement of effective management practices. When management is properly implemented, any institution, including educational institutions, will be capable of producing high-quality performance and outcomes (Daniel C. Kambey, 2004).

Research findings from various scholars indicate that educational institutions achieve quality when their management is conducted professionally and managerially. One of the competencies required for professional institutional management is the implementation of communication strategies to achieve educational objectives (Wahyudi Waluyo Jati, 2016). According to Ernie (2010), communication may take the form of personal or interpersonal communication, communication within work groups through various communication network structures, and communication patterns within organizational structures, including: (1) interpersonal communication, (2) communication in various forms of communication networks, (3) communication patterns within organizational structures, and (4) informal communication within organizations. Meanwhile, Amir (1999) argues that appropriate and proper communication should be carefully considered before the communication process takes place. Mafri Amir states in his work that the Qur'an also provides valuable guidance regarding the ethics of communication. Several terms mentioned include *qaulan ma'rufah*, *qaulan sadida*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan karima*, *qaulan maisura*, and *qaulan layyinan*.

Based on the above discussion, it is crucial for this study to examine communication strategies and quality improvement in Islamic educational institutions at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level that operate under the auspices of Islamic boarding schools. A strategy refers to the comprehensive set of conditional decisions regarding actions to be implemented in order to achieve predetermined objectives.

The results of the observations indicate that all components within the environment of MTs Al Hikmah Purwoasri share an awareness of the need to face competition through the improvement of institutional quality. This awareness is conveyed repeatedly and increasingly reinforces the institution's quality. Various communication strategies are implemented through formal, informal, and non-formal means, all of which are carried out to achieve the aspired development of quality.

Based on the factual data presented above, it is important to examine the application of management from a theoretical perspective. From the viewpoint of quality and excellence as sources of competitive advantage, Islamic boarding schools must be assessed in terms of their capacity to act as key actors and winners in this era of intense competition. This condition gives rise to two contrasting groups: one as victims, unable to compete, and the other as victors, possessing relevant and robust competitive instruments. Consequently, there is no alternative for pesantren to remain existent and competitive except by becoming victors. The

victor group will dominate various aspects of life, including economic, social, educational, political, cultural, and informational domains. Therefore, this study seeks to elucidate the communication strategies employed by the *madrasah* principal in enhancing *madrasah*-based educational quality, as implemented at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research method falls within the category of field research. Field research is conducted to identify and observe the settings in which the events under investigation take place, thereby obtaining direct and up-to-date information on the issues concerned, as well as serving as a means of cross-checking existing data and sources (Fitri and Haryanti 2020). From the perspective of the nature of the data, this study is categorized as qualitative research, namely research that aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and other aspects holistically, through descriptive analysis in the form of words and language, within a specific natural context, and by employing various naturalistic methods (Moleong 2013).

A case study also seeks to describe a particular setting, object, or event in depth (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). This view is supported by (Yin 2002) who states that a case study is a strategy chosen to answer “how” and “why” questions, particularly when the focus of the research is to examine contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts. In this study, a case study approach is employed to examine the communication strategies of the *madrasah* principal in improving the quality of the educational institution, with a case study conducted at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri. The case study method was selected to obtain accurate data regarding the principal’s strategic management in developing students’ talents and interests. This case study is based on the research site, which possesses specific characteristics related to the communication strategies of the *madrasah* principal in enhancing institutional quality at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri. By employing this case study design, it is expected that the information and data collected will reflect various experiences related to the research focus. From this research site, key insights can be synthesized regarding the communication strategies of the *madrasah* principal in improving the quality of the educational institution at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri.

The data collection procedures employed in this study include the following. Participant observation. In this method, the researcher seeks to conduct systematic observation and recording of observable phenomena at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri. The observation technique applied in this study is participant observation, which aims to observe events as they naturally occur in the field. Through this technique, the researcher is directly involved in or interacts with the activities carried out by the research subjects, while systematically collecting the required data.

In-depth interviews. The interview method in this study is used as a guideline for data collection. The researcher employs in-depth interviews to explore comprehensive information regarding the communication strategies of the *madrasah* principal in improving the quality of

the educational institution, with a case study at MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri. Documentation. The documentation includes photographs, *madrasah* documents, interview transcripts, and documents related to the history and development of the *madrasah*. All documentation is collected and analyzed to ensure the completeness of the research data. In this study, the researcher also takes photographs relevant to the research topic.

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials so that the information can be easily communicated to others (Nik Haryanti 2019). Data analysis involves systematically identifying and organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials collected by the researcher. This analytical activity is followed by examining the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing, identifying patterns, and determining what is meaningful and worthy of systematic investigation and reporting. As this study employs a case study design, data analysis is conducted in three stages: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) verification and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014).

3. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication Processes Employed by the Principal of MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri

1. Awareness of the Communication Strategy Process

The research findings related to communication strategies encompass an understanding that focuses on the process of communication. The communication process consists of a sequential series of stages involving various communication components, namely the communicator, message, communication media, communicant, and effects. More profoundly, a communication strategy represents the practical application of these components, which, within their interactive framework, are complemented by considerations of the cultural environment in which the communication is carried out (Cangara, 2009).

The communication data of leadership at MTs Al Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri can be positioned as a form of organizational awareness. The findings indicate that the relationship between organization and communication can be understood from both operational and conceptual perspectives. The operational perspective relates to organizational working principles as efforts undertaken by the principal of MTs Al Hikmah to achieve organizational goals. Through communication, the *madrasah* principal influences the behavior of all human resources by means of coordination for the integration and direction of internal organizational activities, as well as the adjustment of external activities to ensure adaptability to the environment in order to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, Syafaruddin explains that communication involves the transmission of messages from the *madrasah* principal and the understanding derived from the attribution of meaning (Napitupulu, 2019). It is a process that emphasizes the transfer of meaning; if information or ideas are not converted into shared understanding, communication does not occur. The

speaker is the individual who prepares information and conveys it to be understood by the listener or message recipient (Robert J. Starratt, 2017).

The importance of organizational communication is also reflected in the Qur'anic verse found in Surah Al-Qashash (28:51): "And indeed, We have conveyed the Word to them in succession so that they might take heed".

The data also indicate that one of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of communication strategies is the credibility of the communicator, which consists of aspects of trustworthiness and expertise. The communicator's expertise in conveying message content to the communicant plays a crucial role in ensuring message acceptance. Trust can also be established through positive personal characteristics such as honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and other ethical qualities. Communication appeal may derive from both physical attributes and the communicator's overall appearance. An attractive appearance can generate sympathy among communicants. Additionally, appeal may emerge due to various forms of similarity between the communicator and the communicant, such as shared ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, regional background, and other common characteristics (Lubis, 2016).

The control function of communication implies that communication operates to regulate and direct the behavior of others or organizational members in ways that must be complied with. For instance, employees are required to communicate work-related complaints to their immediate supervisors, adhere to job descriptions, and comply with all organizational policies. According to Harold D. Lasswell, as cited in Uchjana Effendy (2013), the functions of communication include: (1) enabling humans to control their environment, (2) facilitating adaptation to the environment in which they exist, and (3) transmitting social heritage to subsequent generations.

A leader embodies the spirit of the institution he or she leads and therefore must be able to understand appropriate ways of communicating with members of the *madrasah* community within the institution (Handoko, 2021). Through such communication, the educational quality of an institution can be effectively implemented and coordinated within institutional programs. Moreover, in an era characterized by rapid and advanced developments, there is a concern that Islamic teachings may become increasingly marginalized, as many individuals are influenced by Western cultures that emphasize materialism and worldly pursuits, thereby distancing society from Islamic civilization and culture that prioritize spiritual and moral values.

The implementation of the communication strategy process of the leader of MTs Al Hikmah Purwoasri is imbued with prophetic values. The *madrasah* principal demonstrates openness and consistently listens to input from others who are involved in the advancement of the *madrasah* (Jahari, Jaja, & A. Rusdiana, 2018). This approach is undertaken so that the principal's interests and policies can be accepted by all parties, thereby ensuring that their implementation proceeds as intended.

The *madrasah* principal must be able to communicate the values embedded in the formulated *madrasah* objectives to all staff, teachers, students, and the wider community, or all components of the *madrasah*, in order to achieve shared understanding and a sense of ownership that can strengthen commitment among personnel. This is crucial because a visionary leader requires strong support from all members of the institution to realize its vision, mission, and goals. One educator provided a reflection on the system of responsibility in carrying out the mandate of an institutional program.

Based on the indications of the findings above, the communication of the *madrasah* principal falls within a regulative role, in which the leader, positioned as a superior, is able to control information while also providing instructions to subordinates. These messages must be clearly understood by subordinates. In this context, subordinates require adequate information so that the messages conveyed by the leader can be accurately received and properly implemented.

The regulative role reflected in the interview text above is not limited to forming groups in the effort to realize an excellent *madrasah*, but also includes granting teachers the autonomy to participate in training programs such as BIMTEK and MGMP. All of these activities require direction from the *madrasah* principal (Sauri, A. S., Widyasari, W., & Sesrita, A., 2018). The principal employs various approaches in communicating the *madrasah's* vision and mission to ensure that its reputation is maintained and that the institution continues to evolve. In addition to internal communication, the *madrasah* principal also engages in external communication through various media, methods, and events. This includes the use of *madrasah* magazines, word-of-mouth communication, and even social media. Communication with teachers and staff is conducted directly through meetings, while communication with students is aimed at ensuring that the vision and mission of educational quality are consistently conveyed, developed, and internalized by the students (Rokhmawanto, S., Marlina, D., & arifah, 2020).

Based on the above, the position of the *madrasah* principal can be categorized as reflecting effective leadership. Effective educational leadership is demonstrated by the ability and readiness of the *madrasah* principal, as the institutional leader, to influence, guide, direct, and mobilize *madrasah* staff to work effectively in order to achieve the educational and instructional goals that have been mutually agreed upon. Similarly, Pehrson (2016), Robbins (2011), Schermerhorn (2010), and George (2005) assert that communication requires shared understanding of information among two or more individuals or groups. Effective communication is essential in organizations because it influences nearly every aspect of organizational behavior. Therefore, communication within the *madrasah* environment, as conducted by the *madrasah* principal, plays a vital role in the advancement of the *madrasah*, particularly in enhancing educational quality.

Improving *madrasah* quality ultimately constitutes a strategy to enhance educational quality through the delegation of authority and responsibility for decision-making to the *madrasah* principal, while involving the participation of individuals, including *madrasah* personnel and members of the community. Therefore, the implementation of *madrasah*-based quality improvement management brings about changes in educational management patterns, shifting from a centralized system to a decentralized one (Mutohar, 2013). Within a decentralized system, management functions that were previously carried out by the central government or provincial and district/city education offices can, in part, be undertaken professionally by the *madrasah* itself (Richard Huseman C. 2017).

Any *madrasah* principal who leads an educational institution and is able to carry out effective communication functions with all stakeholders will generally be regarded by teachers, students, staff, and the community as an ideal principal. Such leadership is capable of motivating work performance and fostering a disciplined work culture among educational personnel in carrying out their duties within the *madrasah*.

2. Foundations of the *Madrasah* Principal's Communication Strategy

The communication of the MT's principal refers to the communication conducted by the principal in building and managing organizational performance based on Islamic (religious) values. The communication implemented by the principal is not only aimed at achieving a stable organizational environment but also seeks to cultivate a community that is blessed by Allah in both this world and the hereafter.

The principal of MTs Al Hikmah, as a person entrusted with responsibility and guided by strong pesantren values, consistently acts and makes decisions based on the Qur'an and the communication style of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Although not perfect, the data indicate that the rules, principles, and ethical guidelines of communication taught in Islam are actively applied (Stephen W. Littlejohn, 1992).

The type of communication carried out in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and guided by the Qur'an includes truthful speech (*Qaulan Sadida*), which conveys the truth and avoids falsehood. As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hajj, verse 30: "And avoid false speech." In his communication, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always used words that were good and truthful, making his messages easily understood by the community.

Effective speech (*Qaulan Baligha*) refers to words that touch and leave a lasting impact on the hearts of the listeners. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) employed speech that was effective, easily understood, precise, and straightforward, without being convoluted. He communicated according to the capacity and understanding of his followers. Allah states in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa, verse 63: "They are the ones whose inner thoughts are known to Allah; therefore, turn away from them, admonish them, and speak to them with effective words (*qaulan baligha*)" (Efendi, E., Zahra, A., Alfitrah, A., Pratama, S., Kumala, S., & Habibi, N. 2023).

Good speech (*Qaulan Ma'rufā*) refers to the use of words that are proper, respectful, and do not offend or hurt the feelings of the person being addressed. This type of communication is emphasized in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 263, which states that kind words and forgiveness are better than charity accompanied by hurtful speech. Good speech is characterized by words that bring comfort and pleasure to the listener.

Polite and respectful speech (*Qaulan Karima*) refers to words that are noble, consistently show respect to the communication partner, and never demean or belittle them. This type of communication is taught to honor parents or those who deserve respect. The foundation for *Qaulan Karima* is based on the command of Allah in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Isra, verse 23: "Speak to them with noble words".

Gentle and soft-spoken speech (*Qaulan Layyinah*) refers to communication delivered in a kind and tender manner. Such communication creates a touching and positive impression because it is conducted with friendliness, warmth, and a spirit of amicability.

In addition to the forms or styles of speech mentioned above, the principal of MTs Al Hikmah also carefully maintains attitudes in communication, including: being oriented toward truth and honesty, acting with sincerity and wholeheartedness, communicating politely and earnestly, demonstrating confidence and calmness, and showing a willingness to listen attentively.

3. Goal-Oriented Educational Communication

The principal of MTs Al Hikmah Purwoasri employs communication strategies for the development of the *madrasah*. These efforts are particularly emphasized through the strengthening of written communication, nonverbal communication, and electronic media communication. A detailed explanation of the principal's efforts in implementing communication strategies for the advancement of the *madrasah* is presented as follows.

The strengthening of written communication methods was implemented due to the difficulty the MTs principal initially faced in accessing *madrasah* information effectively upon assuming the position. This lack of access had previously resulted in poor communication between the former leadership and the new administration. While verbal communication continued to be used in the context of *madrasah* development, written communication was significantly reinforced. Consequently, all activities required formal written meeting invitations in addition to verbal announcements. Meetings with parents or guardians, the *madrasah* committee, foundation administrators, teachers, and staff had to be recorded in organized and systematic minutes. Various programs and activities were documented through official implementation decrees and assignment letters, and all activities required formal reports. In this way, the *madrasah's* performance was thoroughly documented, ensuring permanent and reliable records.

Referring to the characteristics of formal communication, as stated by Alvonco, communication occurs within a work context or for organizational purposes and is conducted by an individual or group in the capacity of their official position. Additionally, communication follows hierarchical channels in accordance with the division of tasks, responsibilities, and authority to achieve organizational objectives (Alfonso, 2014). Written communication is formal in nature; written records are permanent, messages become more accurate even when passed through multiple people, it is effective for detailed messages and complex ideas, and it does not require the reader to be present at the same time or place.

Formal Communication Modes of the *Madrasah* Principal in Enhancing Quality at MTs Al Hikmah Purwoasri

1. Downward Vertical Communication (Top-Down) of the *Madrasah* Principal

Downward vertical communication is the process of conveying messages and ideas from a leader to their subordinates. One effort to improve the quality of education at the *madrasah* is through the implementation of leadership communication strategies and styles. The leader's communication, imbued with ethics, humanization (*amar ma'ruf*), liberation (*nahi munkar*), and transcendence (*tu'minu billah*), is highly appreciated by subordinates and the surrounding community (Garnet, 1989). As discussed in Chapter IV, the principal of MTs Al-Hikmah adopts informal and non-formal communication styles, demonstrating flexibility in interactions with colleagues.

This approach fosters a deep sense of closeness during the daily execution of tasks. Based on the researcher's findings, the principal of MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri, Kediri, applies the concept of humanization ethics (*amar ma'ruf*) in communication. For example, when motivating colleagues and students, the principal begins with self-reflection and exemplary behavior. Every morning, the principal walks through the classrooms to ensure they are clean, desks and chairs are properly arranged, and that the learning and teaching activities (KBM) are ready to be conducted with focus and dedication.

Every morning, the principal of the *madrasah* stands at the school gate, supervising students who may not be behaving properly, and then circulates through the classrooms to ensure they are ready for learning and teaching activities (KBM). The principal checks whether the classrooms are tidy and whether the desks and chairs are properly aligned, even if they are absent in the morning due to external events or invitations. During *madrasah* examinations, the principal always takes time to monitor the classrooms first, and if visitors arrive, permission is simply requested before attending to them.

Despite the large number of teaching and non-teaching staff, the *madrasah* principal takes time to greet and supervise each member. For instance, when an educator is reluctant to communicate or hesitant to share ideas, the principal encourages participation by directing questions to subject teachers, homeroom teachers, the vice

principal for curriculum, administrative staff, and other employees. These questions are tailored to each person's responsibilities for example, asking sequentially about any challenges or problems encountered in their classrooms (Octavia, & Savira, 2017).

Exchanging polite and proper greetings as a leader reflects the guidance of Allah in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 235: "And it is no sin for you to propose to women with hints or to conceal (the desire to marry them) in your hearts. Allah knows that you will mention them; however, do not make a secret marriage proposal, except by speaking to them with words that are good (*qaulan ma'rufā*)" (Ilaihi, 2010).

Field data also indicate that the *madrasah* principal's communication with staff incorporates various forms of liberation ethics (*nabi munkar*), in which this ethical approach plays a crucial role in reminding individuals of their duties and responsibilities to act for the common good and to continually improve. This process encourages collective growth and progress without imposing pressure or causing resentment (Robbins & Jones, 2004). These findings align with the results of interviews conducted with one of the educators at MTs Al-Hikmah.

The *madrasah* principal plays a persuasive role, as reflected in several interview responses. The way the principal influences subordinates involves three key actions. First, authority: this relates to the teacher's performance in properly following the principal's directives, as subordinates are expected to comply with their leader. Second, responsibility: fulfilling duties is essential to achieving the *madrasah's* goals effectively. The principal contributes to fostering a sense of responsibility among subordinates, requiring each division to be aware of and accountable for their tasks. Third, discipline: this is crucial for improving education itself. Discipline encompasses both time management and work habits, which directly affect the quality of education. Achieving educational objectives requires self-awareness and adherence to rules to establish a culture of disciplined work (Octavia & Savira, 2017).

The implementation of formal communication also follows a linear pattern, as indicated by the data above, where communication involves reciprocal interactions and the mutual effort to convey spoken messages that ensure shared understanding. This context emphasizes personality flexibility that consistently maintains effective interpersonal communication.

A linear interaction pattern occurs because the *madrasah* principal consistently strives to ensure mutual understanding among colleagues. This means the principal neither looks down on the teachers nor perceives themselves as the most powerful authority. While the principal positions themselves to maximize performance, daily interactions at the *madrasah* are largely conducted in a linear or peer-to-peer manner. This linear model identifies the key elements of the communication process (Elvino, 2007). Therefore, communication is generally regarded as a linear function.

One of the teachers at MTs Al-Hikmah observed that the principal is able to communicate effectively with teachers and subordinates by maintaining an egalitarian approach, even though there is a slight presence of “respect, humility, and deference,” as the figure of a *kyai* remains inherently part of their persona (Mulyana, 2010).

Next is the strategy of transcendence communication ethics (*tu'minu billah*), a principle of communication grounded in faith and obedience to Allah SWT and His teachings. The *madrasah* principal consistently reinforces and communicates to both teaching and non-teaching staff the importance of involving their hearts in seeking Allah's pleasure and blessings. Consequently, in addition to serving at the *madrasah*, their actions are imbued with divine favor, blessings, and spiritual value when performed with sincerity and wholehearted devotion (Widiasih, 2016).

Based on the field research findings, when viewed through the lens of formal communication, some unique patterns emerge. Staff are expected to participate, but violations do not result in serious accountability. For example, every Monday after the flag ceremony, a meeting is held in which formal communication takes place: the principal provides space for staff to offer input, suggestions, and critiques, but questions are not permitted.

From this statement, it can be inferred that offering suggestions and critiques is considered a formality within the routine Monday meetings. Only truly urgent matters are addressed afterward in discussions with the vice principals for curriculum. This approach aims to prevent meetings from taking excessive time while still providing teaching and non-teaching staff with the opportunity to remain motivated in achieving a higher and more dignified quality of the *madrasah*. Staff are encouraged to continuously upgrade their knowledge, enhance critical thinking, contribute ideas, and adapt to global developments, all while preserving and respecting traditional *santri* values (Efendi, et al, 2023).

The principal of MTs Al-Hikmah employs a communication style that is both flexible and firm, combining formal and non-formal approaches. Overall, the principal demonstrates flexibility and formality in communicating with the *madrasah* community to advance educational quality at MTs Al-Hikmah. Based on the analysis above, the effectiveness and credibility of the top-down communication are rated at 98%, with the remaining 2% attributed to a few teaching and non-teaching staff who still feel hesitant or reluctant to communicate with the principal, except when the principal directly addresses them with questions (Susanto, 2020).

Furthermore, some observations among the teachers at MTs Al-Hikmah indicate that the principal's communication with the teachers is perceived positively and effectively fosters good communication among the teaching staff. Data collected show that the quality of the principal's effective communication with MTs Al-Hikmah teachers includes the following: communication continues even through social media or representatives; communication is conducted politely and courteously;

communication is proportional; communication is based on necessity; and communication is carried out in a humble and straightforward manner.

Compared to other *madrasabs*, many still experience disharmony between the principal and subordinates due to a lack of effective communication. A leader, in this case the *madrasah* principal, should serve as a role model for subordinates, particularly teachers, to foster closeness and rapport in daily interactions. This is especially important within the office or *madrasah* environment and in matters related to *madrasah* affairs. Therefore, proportionality and mutual consideration are required from both parties (Susanto, 2020).

Thus, the top-down communication process, as described above, reflects the principal's strategy of stimulating initiative from individuals themselves at the top management level, which is realized in performance outcomes through their actions. According to Patton (2002) and Skinner, as cited in Susanto (2020), intention is manifested through a process of formulation and implementation aimed at performance objectives. Effective management involves setting action plans based on specific goals that originate from collectively agreed-upon desires.

2. Vertical Upward Communication Strategy (Bottom-Up) of the *Madrasah* Principal

The intensity of communication between teachers, stakeholders, and the principal at MTs Al-Hikmah is relatively frequent, utilizing both formal and informal styles. Vertical upward communication is the process of conveying messages and ideas from a middle leader to a top leader. In this context, upward communication occurs on two levels: first, from members of MTs Al-Hikmah to the principal, and second, from the principal to the Al-Hikmah pesantren foundation.

Focusing on the first level, this study examines vertical upward communication from MTs Al-Hikmah staff members to the principal. Communication strategies from subordinate educational and non-educational staff to the principal generally use formal Indonesian, while informal communication employs the regional Javanese language (*krama inggil*) and polite expressions (Susanto, 2020).

This communication occurs directly, as the principal is not only the leader of the *madrasah* but also a *kyai*, a respected community figure in Kediri and its surrounding areas. Therefore, upward communication emphasizes courteous, polite, and humanistic ethics. Vertical bottom-up communication is particularly limited to conveying specific tasks and programs, considering that the principal of MTs Al-Hikmah is both a *madrasah* leader and a member of the *kyai* family in the community.

Communication from MTs Al-Hikmah members to the principal demonstrates flexibility. This is evident when the principal communicates in the hallways, in the Vice Principal Office, during visits (*anjangsana*), via WhatsApp groups, with colleagues, and with *madrasah* members, using informal language and occasionally engaging in lighthearted banter with staff.

The communication implemented by the principal also reflects an integrative role, aiming to achieve alignment and unity in task execution, including channels through social media such as WhatsApp, in both formal and informal contexts. Consistent with Rosnow (2005), social media networks are crucial in determining work performance. Informally organized network structures have a minimal number of connections among group members. Selection, encoding, and decoding procedures must be repeated for each connection path, increasing the likelihood of semantic distortion and communication challenges with each additional link.

Second, horizontal bottom-up communication from the principal to the pesantren foundation is also significant. As the principal is part of the foundation's family, interactions with foundation trustees tend to be relaxed and informal, except during official forums. Daily interactions lead to code-switching and code-mixing in communication, both from staff to the principal and from the principal to the foundation.

The principal of MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri demonstrates trustworthiness and is easily approachable by internal and external parties. Policy decisions are always appropriate, given that MTs Al-Hikmah collaborates with the pesantren to remain a competitive and high-quality *madrasah*, comparable to public *madrasahs* not affiliated with a pesantren.

Formal communication with family members and foundation trustees is conducted during events and public meetings outside family gatherings. As all foundation trustees are extended family of the pesantren, any policy decision requires consultation with family and *madrasah* members. This approach prevents conflict between formal education and pesantren education (MADIN). Consequently, both educational systems do not unilaterally create regulations or programs. The goal is to integrate formal and pesantren education under one mission, ensuring that Al-Hikmah Foundation maintains a reputable, excellent, and dignified name, fostering both IMTAQ (faith and piety) and IPTEK (science and technology) in graduates of Al-Hikmah Purwoasri.

Considering the educational reality within the pesantren, a system of rationality emerges, encompassing power in decision-making, the behavior of power-holding actors, resource allocation, and the ability to create interdependence among organizational elements. Communication practices must account for representation, the existing power relations, and how groups interpret the basis of authority for effective communication.

The findings above indicate the role of informal communication within the Al-Hikmah pesantren family. Practices once controlled by a single individual are now shared among multiple people. Consequently, communication involves more than merely sharing information; it also includes efforts to persuade individuals or groups to engage in community activities. Informal communication aims to strengthen social

bonds and a sense of fraternity. Therefore, communicative practices must be fully understood by the communicants (Cangara, 2013).

3. Interpersonal Communication Strategy of the Principal

The interpersonal communication process contains essential elements within the components of communication, which cannot be separated. If any one of these elements is absent, interpersonal communication cannot occur. Based on the review and research findings, the principal of MTs Al-Hikmah has fulfilled the elements of interpersonal communication, namely:

- a) Source as the communicator, namely the principal, where all communication events involve the source as the creator or sender of information.
- b) Message, which is something conveyed by the sender to the receiver and can be delivered face-to-face or through communication media. In this study, the message consists of the content of institutional programs aimed at realizing the institution's vision and mission into high-quality educational outcomes.
- c) Media, which are tools used to transfer messages from the source to the receiver. The media used by the principal include the school magazine, social media platforms, and direct information through parents or alumni of Al-Hikmah.
- d) Receiver, which refers to the parties targeted by the messages sent by the source; in this case, the receivers include all stakeholders, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and the surrounding community (Rosnow, 2005).
- e) Influence or effect, which refers to the differences in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the receiver before and after receiving the message. Feedback from effective communication produces outputs of high quality, both spiritually and intellectually.
- f) Environment, where the surrounding community is impacted by the communication, either positively or negatively. (Rosnow, 2005).

Based on the presentation of top-down and bottom-up communication, it is evident that communication is directly established by the principal with subordinates, utilizing both formal and informal communication. However, in terms of frequency, informal communication in the Javanese dialect is used more often, with information conveyed outside of official meetings or special gatherings.

From the author's observations, possessing the ability to communicate interpersonally in an effective manner is not easy. The principal must continuously engage in communication with all teachers at the school, using both formal and informal methods. Any lack of clarity in the information provided by the principal could potentially backfire.

Thus, interpersonal communication as a form of behavior can shift from being highly effective to highly ineffective. Interpersonal relationships will only function effectively if both parties fulfill certain conditions. The effectiveness of the principal's

interpersonal communication at MTs Al-Hikmah is implemented through several basic communication principles, which are elaborated as follows:

- a) Openness: Openness between stakeholders, teaching staff, and non-teaching staff toward the principal. With the principal being transparent about information provided by the teachers, the teachers are indirectly involved in matters concerning the school, including issues such as teacher salaries.
- b) Empathy: Both the principal and members of the staff experience mutual empathy. For instance, when the principal becomes aware that a staff member is burdened by a personal loan, the principal offers suggestions to alleviate the difficulty. Conversely, when the principal experiences a misfortune, members of the institution assist in mitigating it. Through this, the principal demonstrates empathy toward teachers via continuous interpersonal communication. The principal's concern for the well-being and circumstances of teachers is evident. By consistently inquiring about each teacher's condition, the principal motivates them. This sense of empathy significantly impacts teachers' psychology, as it conveys care and appreciation, fostering emotional bonds that enhance motivation and diligence among teachers (Susanto, 2020).
- c) Support: The principal and staff mutually provide support to one another, and this extends to interactions with the foundation. Communication occurs not only within the school environment but also with the foundation, where leaders at various levels of the organization reciprocate support. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the principal provides support through verbal encouragement and praise.
- d) Positive Regard: There exists mutual positive regard between members and leadership, and vice versa. This positive disposition relates to the implementation of short-term, medium-term, and long-term institutional programs, where members maintain a constructive attitude without excessive negativity in responding to ideas and proposals.

Interpersonally, the principal stated, "I am someone who always thinks positively first. For example, when a student skips school and sleeps in class, I will clarify why the student skipped and slept, regardless of pesantren activities. Sometimes I also ask students why they have not paid tuition fees. If I find the reason reasonable, I will provide a special policy for that student" (Widiasih, 2016).

From the principal's explanation, it is evident that he tends not to form negative judgments immediately but first seeks to understand the issue before making a decision. The principal demonstrates flexibility in problem-solving, refraining from drawing immediate conclusions and instead identifying the root cause of the problem and seeking appropriate solutions.

- e) Equality: Regarding equality, the principal at MTs Al-Hikmah demonstrates a balanced approach with stakeholders and staff members; however, complete equality cannot be assumed, considering Javanese customs that emphasize respect for highly knowledgeable individuals, particularly in religious fields such as *Kyai*, *Ulama*, and members of the pesantren family. Consequently, members of the MTs Al-Hikmah community observe certain boundaries in their communication. This respect occurs naturally, without requiring explicit orders or coercion.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and the discussion above, it can be concluded that the communication processes employed by the principal of MTs Al-Hikmah Purwoasri tend to utilize both formal and informal methods. The principal is capable of acting as a “human engineer,” upholding communication principles grounded in empathy, social respect, cooperation, and collegiality. Through formal, informal, internal, and external communication styles, the principal fosters warmth with colleagues and maintains the distinguished reputation of the pesantren-based institution. In terms of credibility, communication has been proven to enhance the quality of education, as evidenced by the effectiveness of interactions between the communicator and the communicants. This effectiveness allows messages to be easily understood and implemented, with stakeholders exchanging information regarding tasks and programs at short-term, medium-term, and long-term levels. Various communication roles—including persuasive, informative, integrative, and collective functions are applied using linear patterns to improve the overall quality of communication. Broadly, the principal’s communication style demonstrates flexibility and formal structure toward all school members, contributing to the improvement of educational quality at MTs Al-Hikmah. The coefficient of effectiveness and credibility of top-down communication was measured at 98%, with the remaining 2% due to some educators and staff feeling hesitant to communicate directly with the principal.

The modes of communication formalities employed by the principal to enhance the quality of MTs Al-Hikmah are reflected in multiple ways. In top-down communication, the principal applies a formal style in providing space for ideas, suggestions, problems, and criticisms related to teaching, performance, or other matters concerning MTs Al-Hikmah, conducted with ethics of liberation, humanization, and decentralized authority. In bottom-up communication, formal communication primarily occurs within the principal’s family circle and with the governing body of the MTs Al-Hikmah foundation, while public meetings outside scheduled agendas also follow formal procedures. A system of rationality is applied in policy-making, ensuring collaboration between the educational institution and the foundation to implement integrated educational programs. Diagonal communication is also employed, allowing information to be exchanged through various oral and social media channels with informants relevant to each division of MTs Al-Hikmah’s operational performance.

Interpersonal communication is optimally implemented by the principal, who considers appropriate timing and context to interact with subordinates. Openness is maintained regarding the dissemination of information, empathy is shown by inquiring about the conditions of teachers and students, and positive regard is demonstrated through professional and resilient leadership, motivating both students and subordinates. The principal also provides support in the form of moral encouragement, rewards for teachers, and the enhancement of educational facilities, which collectively contribute to the overall improvement of educational quality at MTs Al-Hikmah.

REFERENCES

- Amir, Mafri. (1999) *Etika Komunikasi Massa Dalam Pandangan Islam*, Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu.
- Arpah, Siti. (2017) "Peran Dan Fungsi Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran." *Al-Munawwarob. Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9:51-63. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i1.7194>
- Asiah, S. (2017). Kepemimpinan Manajerial Pimpinan Lembaga Pendidikan (Kepala Sekolah) Dalam Pengembangan Kualitas Produktivitas Kinerja Guru. *TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 1-14.
- Azizah, N., Murgiyanto, M., & Nugroho, R. (2019). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Motivasi Kerja Terhadap Komitmen Organisasional Dan Kinerja Guru Pada SMK Abdurrahman Wahid Lamongan. *Equilibrium: Jurnal Ekonomi-Manajemen-Akuntansi*, 15(2), 240. <https://doi.org/10.30742/equilibrium.v15i2.683>
- Cangara, Hafied. *Komunikasi Politik: Konsep, Teori dan Strategi* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2009), 292.
- Cangara, Hafied. *Pengantar Ilmu Komunikasi*, Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2011.
- Cassandra Pehrson, Smita C. Banerjee. "Responding empathically to patients: Development, implementation, and evaluation of a communication skills training module for oncology nurses." *Journal.Patient Education and Counseling*, 2016. Vol.99, Issue 4, Januari 2016, Pages 610-616. Diakses Agustus 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcc.2015.11.021>
- Daniel C. Kambey, (2004), *Manajemen Kualitas Total dalam Pendidikan*, Terjemahan Buku *Total Quality Management*, Edward & Sallis, (Pascasarjana Universitas Manado).
- Efendi, E., Soraya, S. F., Hajar, S., Mutaghayyir, A. A., & Al Aziz, O. (2023). Analisis Manajemen Dakwah melalui Media Digitalisasi Maulid Arbain Studi Kasus Majelis Ta'lim Darusshofa Medan. *VISA: Journal of Vision and Ideas*, 3(3), 600-613. <https://doi.org/10.47467/visa.v3i3.754>
- Efendi, E., Zahra, A., Alfitriah, A., Pratama, S., Kumala, S., & Habibi, N. (2023). Analisis Konsep Perkembangan Ilmu Komunikasi Islam di Indonesia. *VISA: Journal of Vision and Ideas*, 3(3), 579-585. <https://doi.org/10.47467/visa.v3i3.641>
- Efendi, E., Zahra, A., Alfitriah, A., Pratama, S., Kumala, S., & Habibi, N. (2023). Analisis Konsep Perkembangan Ilmu Komunikasi Islam di Indonesia. *VISA: Journal of Vision and Ideas*, 3(3), 579-585. <https://doi.org/10.47467/visa.v3i3.641>
- Effendy, Onong Uchjana. *Ilmu, Teori dan Filsafat Komunikasi*, Bandung: Penerbit Citra Aditya Bakti, 2013.
- Elvino Ardianto, *Filsafat Ilmu Komunikasi*, Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media, 2007), h.27.
- Garnet, James L. "Effective Communications in Government", dalam James L. Perry, editor. 1989. *Handbook of Public Administration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 190-192
- Handayani, T., & Rasyid, A. A. (2015). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Motivasi Guru, dan Budaya Organisasi terhadap Kinerja Guru SMA Negeri Wonosobo. *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan*, 3(2), 264-277. <https://doi.org/10.21831/amp.v3i2.6342>
- Handoko, H. (2021). Gaya Komunikasi Kepala Madrasah Terhadap Peningkatan Kinerja Guru Di MTs Al Huda Pangkalan Susu Kabupaten Langkat. *Journal Of Education And Teaching Learning (JETL)*, 3(1), 13-22. <https://doi.org/10.51178/jetl.v3i1.100>
- Ilaihi, Wahyu *Komunikasi Dakwah* (Cet. I, Remaja Rosdakarya: Bandung, 2010), 183.
- Jahari, Jaja dan A. Rusdiana. "*Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Islam*". (Bandung: Yayasan Darul Hikam, 2020), 78
- James G. Robbins dan Barbara S. Jones *Effective Communication for Today's Manager*. Terjemahan oleh Turman Sirait, (Jakarta: Tulus Jaya, 2004), 241.
- Johnson Alfonso, *Practical Communication Skill* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2014),141-142
- Lubis, Ali Musa (2016). *Organisasi, Komunikasi, dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*. An-Nahdhah, 10 (2).
- M. George, Jennifer. "*Organizational Behavior*." USA: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
- Mulyana, Deddy. *Ilmu Komunikasi: Suatu pengantar*, Cet.XIV, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya: 2010). 89-90
- Mutohar, Prim Masrokan. *Manajemen Mutu Madrasah: Strategi Peningkatan mutu dan Daya Saing Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*. Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2013.
- Napitupulu, D. S. (2019). *Komunikasi Organisasi Pendidikan Islam*. At-Ta'dib: Jurnal Ilmiah Prodi Pendidikan Agama Islam, 11(2), 127 - 136. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.staindirundeng.ac.id/index.php/tadib/article/view/260>
- Octavia, L. S., & Savira, S. I. Gaya Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan., 2017. 1(1), <https://doi.org/10.26740/jdmp.v1n1.p7-14>

- Patton, M.Q., *Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry: A Personal, Experiential Perspective*. 2002. *Qualitative Social Work* 1, 261-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636>
- Pidarta Made. *Manajemen Pendidikan Indonesia*, Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2011.
- Praja, Tatag Satria *Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Ilmu Sosial Profetik dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum 2013 di Madrasah*. (Disertasi, Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga) 124
- Richard Huseman C. *Business Communication*, (Rinehart and Winston: 2017), 172.
- Robbins, Stephen. *"Organizational Behavior."* New Jersey: Pearson, 2011.
- Robert J. Starratt, *Menghadirkan Pemimpin Visioner: Kiat Menegaskan Peran Sekolah*, Ditekan oleh: Y. Triyono, SJ dan Henricus Tugimin dapat juga Nawawy, Fory Armin. (2017). *Komunikasi dan Organisasi Pendidikan*. Gorontalo: Ideas Publishing
- Rokhmawanto, S., Marlina, D., & Arifah, Umi. (2020). *Manajemen Pengembangan Kurikulum Madrasah Berbasis Ilmu Sosial Profetik Dalam Mewujudkan Madrasah Unggul Di Ma An Nawawi Berjan Purworejo*. *An-Nidzam : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, 7(1), 16-33. <https://doi.org/10.33507/an-nidzam.v7i2.340>
- Rosnow Stewart L. Tubbs dan Sylvia Moss, *Human Communication* (konteks konteks komunikasi) Jilid II (Singapore. Mcgraw Hill, Inc: 2005), 188.
- Sagala, Syaiful. *Human Capital; Membangun Modal Sumber Daya Manusia Berkarakter Unggul Melalui Pendidikan Berkualitas*, Depok: Kencana, 2017.
- Sauri, A. S., Widyasari, W., & Sesrita, A. *Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Terhadap Kinerja Guru*. *Tadbir Muwabbid*, 2018. 2(1), 73. [Diakses di Mendeley]. <https://doi.org/10.30997/jtm.v2i1.1160>
- Schemerhorn. *"Organizational Behavior."* USA: John W and Son's Inc, 2010.
- Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Theories of Human Communication*, Fourth Edition, Belmont, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 198
- Sule, Ernie Tisnawati dkk, (2010). *Pengantar Manajemen*, Jakarta: Prenada Media Group.
- Susanto, Joko (2020). *Etika Komunikasi Islami*. *WARAQAT : Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 1(1), 24. <https://doi.org/10.51590/waraqat.v1i1.28>
- Wahyudi Waluyo Jati," (2016). *Strategi Peningkatan Minat Orangtua Untuk Menyekolahkan Anaknya di SMP Negeri 37 Purworejo*, Disertasi, Magister Manajemen dan Site Widya Wiwaha Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta
- Widiasih, Puti Archianti *Peran Kepemimpinan Profetik dan Pemberdayaan Psikologis Dalam Membangun Keterikatan Kerja Karyawan*, *Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Psikologi: Kajian Empiris dan Non Empiris Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA*, 03, No. 01 (Mei 2016), 33 (diakses 29 Juni 2024).