

Analysis of Students' Interpersonal Communication Barriers in a Gender-Segregated Environment: Case Study at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu

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Abstract

Students' interpersonal communication skills play an essential role in the success of social interactions. This study aims to analyze the barriers to interpersonal communication in students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu, with a focus on students of the main subject. The method employed was a qualitative case study, involving one key informant and two supporting informants. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's models: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The results showed that low interpersonal communication was influenced by a religion-based education system that implemented gender segregation and a lack of interaction between school residents. This condition hinders the process of getting to know each other between students. However, some students are still able to adjust personally and academically. The novelty of this research lies in the local context, namely the social dynamics in Islamic schools with gender separation, which provides a new understanding of the influence of culture and educational structure on students' interpersonal communication.

Keywords: barriers, gender, communication, student, interpersonal

Abstrak

Keterampilan komunikasi interpersonal siswa memainkan peran penting dalam keberhasilan interaksi sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hambatan komunikasi interpersonal pada siswa di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu, dengan fokus pada siswa mata pelajaran utama. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kasus kualitatif, yang melibatkan satu informan kunci dan dua informan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi mendalam, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman: pengurangan data, penyajian data, dan kesimpulan yang ditarik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi interpersonal yang rendah dipengaruhi oleh sistem pendidikan berbasis agama yang menerapkan segregasi gender dan kurangnya interaksi antar warga sekolah. Kondisi ini menghambat proses saling mengenal antar mahasiswa. Namun, beberapa mahasiswa masih mampu menyesuaikan diri secara pribadi dan akademis. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada konteks lokal, yaitu dinamika sosial di sekolah Islam dengan pemisahan gender, yang memberikan pemahaman baru tentang pengaruh budaya dan struktur pendidikan terhadap komunikasi interpersonal siswa.

Kata kunci: hambatan, gender, komunikasi, siswa, interpersonal

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of conveying information to one or more people, where the delivery requires a response from the recipient as confirmation of their understanding of the information received. Interpersonal communication is defined as the process of sending and receiving messages between two or more people who interact with each other to build and maintain meaningful relationships (DeVito & DeVito, 2019). DeVito emphasizes that interpersonal communication is transactional, meaning that everyone simultaneously becomes the sender and receiver of the message in a context influenced by psychological, social, and cultural factors. This communication not only involves the exchange of information but also reflects the identity, emotions, and dynamics of interpersonal relationships, thereby playing a crucial role in the development of social and professional relationships. Every human being desires a harmonious communication relationship with others (Sobandi & Dewi, 2017; Sutika, 2017). In fact, this is the main purpose of human life, without communication humans cannot interact with other humans in everything, it is better if communication is established in harmony then the relationship between others will be good, the form of the relationship is mutual respect for the existence and position of both parties, and sharing and not harassing each other, (Berger & Roloff, 2019; Gudykunst et al., 1988).

According to Prajato (Fadilah, 2022), with individual communication, they can express their ideas, feelings, hopes, and impressions to others. Communication not only advances humanity but also creates social relationships that are indispensable in the life of social groups. Direct communication is where the sender and receiver of the message can respond to each other directly. Interpersonal communication is the process of communication that occurs between two or more people in advance, where the sender can convey the message directly and the recipient of the message can receive and respond directly (Sahertian et al., 2021; Yulikhah et al., 2019). According to Knapp et al (2018), the stages of interpersonal relationships are a framework that describes the dynamics of the development and decline of relationships between two individuals through the process of communication. This model consists of two main phases: *coming together* and *coming apart*, each of which has five distinct stages. The *coming together* phase begins with initiating, where individuals get to know each other through a brief introduction; followed by experimenting, which is the stage of exchanging basic information to find commonality; then intensifying (deepening), when communication becomes more personal and emotional; then integrating (unification), when individuals begin to be perceived as a social unit; and finally bonding, characterized by formal commitments such as marriage or contract. In contrast, the *coming apart* phase encompasses differentiating, where differences become prominent; circumscribing, characterised by limited communication; stagnating, when the relationship feels stagnant; avoidance, which involves an effort to distance oneself physically and psychologically; and terminating, which marks the end of the relationship. This model evoldemonstrates that interpersonal communication is not static, but rather constantly changing as interactions occur within the relationship.

Adolescence is defined as a transitional developmental period between childhood and adulthood that contains biological, cognitive, psychosocial and social-emotional changes (Kohlberg, 1984; Pearson & Cervetti, 2013; Santrock, 2014). Meanwhile, according to Hurlock (1991), Adolescence lasts from the age of 13 years to 16 years or 17 years, and the end of adolescence is from the age of 16 to 18 years. According to Nabila (2022), the age is legally mature. It can be concluded that adolescence is a time



when their communication begins to expand, starting from their school environment to the environment where they socialise outside of their school environment. According to Rice (Agustriyana & Suwanto, 2017) masa remaja adalah masa peralihan ketika individu tumbuh dari masa anak-anak become an individual who has maturity. This is when teenagers begin to exercise self-control. The self-control experienced by adolescents is both external, in the form of environmental changes, and internal, in the form of characteristics within adolescents that make them relatively turbulent during their development period before entering adulthood. It can be concluded that adolescence is a time when their communication begins to expand, starting from their school environment and extending to the environment where they socialise outside of school.

Students' ability to communicate interpersonally is one of the key factors determining success in interacting with others (Huguet & Regner, 2007; Le Fanu, 2014). Interpersonal communication skills in students are very important because when getting along with their peers, students are often faced with things that require them to be able to express their personal opinions without being accompanied by emotions, anger or rudeness, and even students must be able to try to neutralise the situation if a conflict occurs. Student difficulties that arise in the school environment include low self-esteem, fighting, violating discipline, failing to complete schoolwork, skipping school, frequently being late, opposing teachers, and even being reluctant to commit violence. Therefore, a deeper understanding of student interpersonal communication in the school environment is necessary because it is not uncommon for students to struggle with establishing interpersonal relationships with their peers or other school residents.

Based on observations and interviews at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu, it was found that some students still do not interact with their peers or the school staff. There is a difference in the system of classing by gender for grades 11 and 12, which is to follow the basic principles of religion-based schools by implementing gender segregation. From this phenomenon, class division based on gender, also known as gender segregation, is one of the causes of the lack of interpersonal communication processes among students in the madrasah environment, as indicated by indicators of openness, positive attitudes, and empathy. So, there is a lack of interaction between fellow school residents, not knowing each other, and even some other students do not know students at all who are even famous in the school environment because they often cause problems.

Dusek noted that there are two main functions of schools for adolescents, namely first, to provide opportunities for adolescents to grow socially and emotionally; Second, equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to become economically independent people and become productive members of society, (Arifudin, 2022; Hamuni & Idrus, 2022). Understanding the criteria for students' interpersonal communication in school is essential to support the success of the interpersonal communication process within the school environment. Student openness as a form of students' willingness to respond to each other so that communication between students does not occur miscommunication, an attitude that is often encountered by researchers when they are still teaching at MAN Tarakan, students are still not able to be open to communicate about the conditions of their class more towards an individualistic attitude than negotiating together to solve problems in the classroom.

Positive attitudes in interacting and communicating between students' personalities as a form of positive feelings that are channelled in the delivery and reception of information in communicating, which, according to researcher, students still lack communication skills in the process of accepting each other's positive feelings, which



triggers miscommunication and misunderstandings to cause quarrels. Empathy is the ability to feel the feelings or emotions that occur during the communication process. Researchers have encountered a lack of empathy in students, such as when the teacher speaks, students sometimes fail to listen attentively. Besides that, there is often ridicule among fellow students due to a lack of empathy in students.

Interpersonal communication in the school environment needs to be instilled in every student. With this understanding in the school environment, it is a reference for students to have a quality character in getting along or blending in a new environment outside the school environment, as well as minimizing miscommunication between students and teachers or between students and madrasah residents in terms of sharing information. Students' ability to communicate interpersonally plays a crucial role in shaping their character as they fulfil their developmental tasks during adolescence. Previous research on interpersonal communication in Islamic schools (Fadilah, 2022) focuses on a shared educational environment, thus leaving a gap in understanding the environment that is segregated by gender. This study addresses these gaps by examining the impact of segregation on communication. In general, the purpose of this study is to analyze the barriers to students' interpersonal communication in a Gender-Segregated Environment in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu.

METHOD

The type of research used is a qualitative approach with a case study method that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the fulfilment of student interpersonal communication at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu. Case studies were chosen because they provide a comprehensive and contextual picture of the phenomenon being studied. The focus of the research is directed at students' understanding of interpersonal communication based on three main indicators, namely openness, positive attitude, and empathy, as developed by De Vito in the study of interpersonal communication (Rahmi, 2021). The main course in this study is grade XII IPS 3 students who were selected based on the recommendation of the Guidance and Counseling teacher because they showed obstacles in fulfilling the aspects of interpersonal communication. As a complement, one homeroom teacher and one BK teacher were also interviewed to strengthen the data and ensure the validity of the perspectives obtained. Key informants (RDs) were selected based on the teacher's recommendations and observed behavioural traits (e.g., introverts, low interaction), which is an extreme case (Yin, 2017).

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher himself, who plays a direct role in the collection, interpretation, and analysis of data (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Suprianto, 2024). To obtain data, semi-structured interviews with the main informants and source triangulation were used as a technique to check the credibility of the data. Interviews allow researchers to delve into information in a more in-depth and flexible manner, while documentation, such as report cards and transcripts of interview results, serves as supporting data. Therefore, the validity of the interview is through member checking, where participants review transcripts to ensure accuracy, (Nowell et al., 2017). The data analysis process follows the model of Miles and Huberman (Kodithuwakku, 2022), which consists of the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity is strengthened through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to check the consistency of information from various points of view and moments of data collection (Fusch et al., 2018).



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interpersonal communication is a crucial foundation in the development of social relationships, particularly in an educational environment that involves intensive interaction among students, teachers, and peers. In the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN), interpersonal communication not only supports the smooth teaching and learning process but also reflects the social and emotional development of students, which is very relevant for character formation. This study is motivated by the importance of understanding the dynamics of interpersonal communication of students, especially in a madrasah environment that has religious nuances and distinctive cultural values. Although this study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method that provides an in-depth and contextual understanding of the fulfillment of student interpersonal communication at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu, there are several methodological limitations that need to be observed, namely 1) the number of participants is limited to one class causing the findings to not be generalized to a wider population; 2) the selection of informants based on teachers' recommendations has the potential to cause participant bias, because the assessment is subjective; and 3) because the researcher plays a direct role as the main instrument, there is a possibility of interpretive bias in the process of data collection and analysis. Additionally, the conditions of time and context during the interview can also impact the research results. These limitations suggest that the findings are more contextual and in-depth, rather than generalized.

Openness

Individual openness in communicating greatly affects various forms of messages, both verbal and nonverbal. This openness reflects the quality of interpersonal communication, which consists of two main dimensions, namely: (1) the willingness to be open in interacting with others, and (2) the readiness to respond to the interlocutor honestly and openly, and vice versa. Based on interviews with guidance and counseling teachers, it is known that the research subjects (RD) showed a tendency to be introverted and less active in social interactions in the classroom. The results of the interview with the BK teacher stated that:

"Selama saya menjadi guru BK dari kelas 10 hingga saat ini di kelas 12, RD dikenal sebagai siswa pasif, pendiam, dan tertutup. Dia tidak terbuka untuk teman sekelas dan memiliki sedikit teman dekat. RD harus diajak bicara terlebih dahulu untuk terlibat dalam komunikasi".

The statement confirms that RD has a closed character, lacks active interaction in the classroom, and tends not to initiate communication first. Social interaction with peers typically occurs only when one party initiates a conversation. This is reinforced by the statement of the homeroom teacher, who also assessed RD as a person who tends to be passive and does not initiate communication without being prompted by others. The homeroom teacher explained that:

"RD dikenal pendiam dan pasif. Dia hanya akan menanggapi jika seseorang memulai percakapan terlebih dahulu. RD jarang menunjukkan inisiatif untuk membuka komunikasi".

The results of the interview with RD himself indicate that his lack of motivation to initiate communication stems from the fact that his friends' responses are not as expected or even unpleasant. In addition, RD also admitted that he was afraid and lacked



confidence that the conversation he conveyed would not be accepted or appreciated by his colleagues. Based on the overall findings of interviews with BK teachers, homeroom teachers, and RD, it can be concluded that openness in RD interpersonal communication remains very low. This is due to low self-confidence and fear of social rejection. This condition causes RD to prefer to be passive and withdraw from social interactions in the school environment.

Social Penetration Theory, developed by Altman & Taylor (1973), explains that the development of interpersonal relationships occurs through a gradual process of self-disclosure, from superficial to more intimate information. According to Harvey and Boynton (2021), Khadpe et al. (2022), and Lin and Chu (2021), this process reflects the individual's level of openness in communication, which is an important aspect of building deep and meaningful relationships. In the context of RD, the lack of openness and the tendency not to initiate interactions suggest that the process of social penetration is hampered in the early stages, i.e. the orientation stage, where individuals share only superficial information and tend to follow social norms without deep emotional involvement. This indicates that RD has not yet reached the stage of affective exploration, where individuals begin to express personal attitudes and form closer relationships. According to Choi & Toma (2022) and Hossain et al. (2023), this lack of openness can hinder the development of interpersonal relationships with classmates, since openness is a prerequisite for building trust and emotional closeness.

In addition, social anxiety is a significant psychological factor in influencing the openness of interpersonal communication. Research by Blöte et al (2010) shows that adolescents with high levels of social anxiety tend to exhibit nervous behaviour and less effective communication performance, which in turn affects the perception and response of peers towards them. Feelings of fear of negative responses and lack of confidence can be interpreted as manifestations of social anxiety. This anxiety can cause RD to avoid social interaction or only respond when talked to, which hinders the formation of deeper relationships with his classmates. Social anxiety can create a negative cycle in which a lack of interaction reinforces feelings of isolation and increases anxiety, which ultimately worsens communication openness (Sigarlaki & Nurvinkania, 2022; van Tonder et al., 2023).

Introverted personalities are often associated with a preference for more limited and in-depth social interactions, as well as a tendency to listen more than talk. Research by Mujahadah et al (2018) revealed that introverted students tend to employ different communication strategies compared to extroverted students, such as more frequent use of time-procrastination and self-monitoring strategies in conversations. In the context of RD, the tendency not to start a conversation and only respond when talked to can be seen as a communication strategy that suits the introvert's personality. However, these strategies can be an obstacle in social environments that demand active participation, such as in the classroom. Therefore, it is essential to recognise that RD's communication behaviour is not solely the result of a lack of social skills but also reflects personality preferences. An approach that is sensitive to the introverted RD's personality, such as providing space for reflection and the opportunity to participate in small groups, can help increase his communication openness without forcing him out of his comfort zone (Rahmi, 2021).

Based on theoretical analysis and empirical findings, interventions to improve RD's communication openness should be holistic, covering psychological, social, and personality aspects, i.e. 1) social skills training programs designed to reduce social anxiety can help RDs feel more comfortable in social interactions; 2) approaches that pay



attention to the personality of introverts RD, such as giving time for preparation before public speaking or using written communication methods, can increase their participation; and 3) creating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment, where all students feel valued and listened to, can encourage RDs to be more open in communicating. In addition, the involvement of teachers and counselors in providing positive feedback and building supportive relationships with RDs can strengthen their confidence. Thus, interventions that are integrated and tailored to the individual needs of the RD can effectively improve the openness of his communication and, ultimately, the quality of his interpersonal relationships in the school environment.

Positive Attitude

Positive attitudes play a crucial role in shaping the quality of interpersonal communication, particularly in educational settings and student interactions within the school environment. According to Lawler (2001) and Rahmi (2021), interpersonal communication will be well maintained if individuals have and express positive feelings towards others, as this can strengthen cooperation and social cohesion within the group. In this study, it was found that the social and classroom environment in the research subject's school, namely RD, showed support for interpersonal interaction. RD's homeroom teacher stated that, although the classroom environment generally provided positive social support, RD showed a tendency to be alone and less active in responding to social initiatives from his friends. This suggests that, even in a conducive environment, individual involvement remains a crucial factor in the effectiveness of interpersonal communication (Yulikhah et al., 2019).

The homeroom teacher's statement that RD only responded when invited first by his friends showed a pattern of reactive communication and not proactive. In the context of social psychology, individuals such as RD can be categorized as having introverted personality tendencies, where involvement in communication is more selective and situational (Giles et al., 2023). In this case, the expression of a positive attitude does not mean that it does not exist, but rather that it is more contextual and depends on the social stimulus received. This phenomenon is also reinforced by Paterno's (2020) social communication theory, which explains that interpersonal communication is influenced by mutual interaction and the perception of the social environment. Therefore, it is essential to recognise that a passive attitude is not merely a form of rejection of the environment, but rather a component of the individual's adaptation mechanism in adjusting to the social dynamics that surround them. The interview with RD himself provides a deeper understanding of the internal dynamics he experiences in social interactions. RD states that he tends to ignore communication if he doesn't find it important or interesting. Still, he also reveals that in discussions considered relevant or enjoyable, he can exhibit positive expressions, such as smiling or laughing. This aligns with Rogers' (1959) view of "unconditional positive regard," which suggests that a person's positive attitude can naturally emerge when they feel safe, accepted, and in an appropriate environment. The positive expressions that appear in the group discussion conditions show that RD has good communication potential but is still limited by the level of comfort and relevance of the topic being discussed. Therefore, the success of interpersonal communication is determined not only by external conditions (peer support), but also by the readiness and openness of the individual to social processes.

The results of these interviews indicate that RD has the capacity to build good interpersonal communication. Still, his personal preference for silence or passivity poses



a challenge in forming stronger social relationships. RD's positive attitude tends to be situational, arising only when he feels emotionally or intellectually involved in the interaction. The social engagement theory of Datu et al. (2025) suggests that social learning, including interpersonal communication, thrives in the context of meaningful interactions and is supported by a responsive environment. Thus, a pedagogical approach that can create a relevant and fun discussion space is indispensable to encourage the active participation of students such as RD. This aligns with Rahmi (2021), which shows that support from peers and teachers can increase students' social engagement, especially among those who tend to be reserved.

Overall, it can be concluded that the interaction between internal and external factors strongly influences positive attitudes in student interpersonal communication, such as RD. A supportive classroom environment is indeed a prerequisite; however, the passive attitude and tendency to silence of RDs suggest that special strategies are needed to encourage their social engagement. Positive expressions, such as smiles, laughter, and selective discussion participation, indicate that RD has the potential to develop in interpersonal communication if given an approach that suits his needs. Therefore, teachers and peers play a central role in creating conditions that consistently stimulate students' positive attitudes. Within the framework of effective interpersonal communication, understanding individual communication preferences is the key to harmonious and productive social interactions (Abed et al., 2023).

Empathy

Empathy is a person's ability to understand and feel the feelings of others, as well as project themselves into the situation experienced by that person. In the context of education, empathy is a crucial aspect in forming healthy social relationships between students and their surrounding environment. According to Malti & Speidel (2024) and Rahmi (2021), the development of prosociality, including empathy, is influenced by a variety of factors, including life experiences and social interactions. Their research emphasizes that empathy is not just an emotional response but also involves complex cognitive processes. In RD's case, although he tends to be quiet and not very active in social interactions, his ability to help his friends shows a well-developed empathy. This finding aligns with the results of Weisz et al. (2022), who suggest that brief interventions can enhance empathy and motivation among high school students. In addition, by Le Fanu (2014), Gender segregation at MAN Palu limits cross-gender interactions, reducing opportunities for the development of empathy beyond same-sex peers. However, the empathy maintained by RD aligns with the findings (Malti & Speidel, 2024) that prosociality can persist despite structural barriers.

Prosocial behavior, such as helping classmates, is a tangible manifestation of empathy in an educational context. RD shows prosocial behavior by helping his friends who have difficulty completing tasks. According to research by Paciello et al. (2013), Empathy plays an important role in encouraging helpful behavior, especially in situations that require personal sacrifice. They found that individuals with high levels of empathy were more likely to engage in helpful behaviors despite facing personal costs or risks. In the context of RD, his willingness to help his friends, even though he may not receive recognition or rewards, demonstrates a high level of empathy. This is also supported by the findings of Brady et al (2023), which suggests that programs designed to increase awareness and empathy among college students can improve helpful behaviours among



them. Therefore, RD's prosocial behavior reflects a developing empathy and serves as a basis for building positive social relationships in the school environment.

Interestingly, RD shows a calm demeanour and doesn't care when his friends do not appreciate his efforts to help or empathy. This shows the existence of a mature emotion regulation mechanism, in which RD can manage his feelings and chooses not to be negatively affected by social neglect. According to Van Lissa et al. (2023), the ability to regulate emotional responses in situations of conflict or social neglect is an important indicator of well-developed empathy. They found that mature empathy involves the ability to understand the perspective of others while still maintaining a personal emotional balance. In the case of RD, his ability to remain calm and not be negatively affected by social neglect shows a high level of empathy and emotion regulation. This is particularly important in an educational context, as students who can effectively manage their emotions tend to have more positive social relationships and a better learning experience.

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering empathy among students. The results of the study showed that guidance and counseling teachers recognized their potential for empathy and provided opportunities for RDs to help their friends. According to research by Brady et al. (2023), Interventions designed by educators to increase awareness and empathy can significantly improve helpful behaviors among students. By providing opportunities for students like RD to engage in helpful activities, teachers not only develop their empathy but also strengthen social relationships in the classroom. Additionally, this approach also helps students who tend to be reserved or less socially active feel more involved and valued in the school environment. Thus, the active role of teachers in recognizing and facilitating the development of empathy is essential in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Based on the above findings, schools should incorporate empathy development into their curricula and extracurricular activities. Programs designed to increase empathy awareness, such as perspective training and group activities, can help students develop these abilities. According to Weisz et al. (2022), brief interventions focused on empathetic motivation can have a significant positive impact on student behavior. Additionally, it is important for schools to create a supportive environment where students feel safe to express their empathy without fear of being ignored or criticized.

The following are the main findings of this study, namely, the results present the main findings related to interpersonal communication barriers among students at MAN Palu. This study found that the main subject (RD) experienced three main obstacles, namely a lack of openness, a negative attitude, and a lack of empathy. These findings are based on the triangulation of data from in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of school documentation presented in the table below:



Table 1.
 Barriers to Interpersonal Communication

Obstacle Aspects	Key Findings	Data Source
Openness	RD finds it difficult to express his feelings and opinions to friends, tends to withdraw socially.	Interview with RD, BK teacher, homeroom teacher
Positive Attitude	RD tends to be negative towards classmates, feel disliked.	BK teacher interviews and classroom observations
Empathy	RD is less able to understand other people's points of view or feelings, low in showing social empathy.	Interviews with RD and homeroom teachers

Source: research results

Based on Table 1, RD interpersonal communication barriers include three main dimensions. Data triangulation from the three informants showed the consistency of findings related to the low ability of RD to develop social interaction.

Table 2.
 Frequency of Emergence of Key Themes from Three Data Sources

Theme	Number of References from RD	Number of References from BK Teachers	Number of References from Homeroom Teachers
Openness	6 quotes	4 quotes	3 Quotes
Positive Attitude	5 quotes	3 Quotes	2 quotes
Empathy	4 quotes	2 quotes	2 quotes

Source: research results

Table 2 shows the frequency of occurrence of the main themes of the three data sources. This data clarifies the power of triangulation carried out by researchers. Based on the research findings, schools and teachers need to implement concrete strategies to improve students' interpersonal communication, especially for students who tend to be passive, such as those with RD. One step that can be taken is to integrate the learning of social skills and empathy into subjects such as PAI and PPKn through discussions, simulations, or reflections. BK teachers can also organize thematic group counseling to train the courage to communicate and overcome social anxiety. The *Social Emotional Learning* (SEL) approach can be applied comprehensively by training teachers to instill the values of self-awareness, empathy, and social relations skills in the learning process. Schools are also advised to implement a buddy system for students who have difficulty interacting, as well as create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Additionally, training teachers on student character and differentiation approaches can facilitate more effective interventions. Thus, these findings can be applied in the development of curriculum and counseling programs that are more responsive to students' psychosocial needs.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study on the analysis of students' interpersonal communication barriers in a gender-segregated environment: Case Study at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Palu, it shows that interpersonal communication is understood as a face-to-face process of conveying information that allows for a two-way exchange of messages and involves more than one individual in a mutually constructive interaction. This study identified three primary aspects of interpersonal communication: openness, positive attitudes, and empathy. Although there were communication problems between students, they did not significantly hinder their personal or academic development. Students can still adapt socially by being open in sharing information, both verbally and non-verbally, and by building relationships based on trust. Positive attitudes are also reflected in appreciative behavior and the ability to collaborate, suggesting that effective communication does not always depend on speaking skills. Additionally, empathy is a crucial foundation for building supportive relationships, as it enables students to understand and respond sensitively to the feelings of their peers. In this context, schools should implement mixed-gender group activities, such as collaborative projects, to foster cross-gender empathy as suggested by Weisz et al. (2022). However, the limitations of this study lie in the design of a single case; Therefore, follow-up studies are recommended to compare several madrasahs to improve the generalization of the findings.

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