



Communication Management in Islamic Boarding Schools in Support of Effective Learning at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School Ponorogo

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the communication management applied at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo and its role in supporting learning effectiveness. As an Islamic boarding school, the pesantren requires an organized communication flow so that educational activities and student guidance can run smoothly. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews involving three key informants (caregivers and teachers) over a two-month period, to describe the communication patterns that occur between caregivers, teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community. The results show that communication management at the boarding school occurs through three main channels: internal communication, communication with parents, and communication with the community. Internal communication is carried out through direct coordination and regular meetings, which help to clarify information and support the orderly learning process. Communication with student guardians utilizes digital media and official Islamic boarding school channels, thereby maintaining information transparency and minimizing misunderstandings. Meanwhile, communication with the community plays a role in supporting major Islamic boarding school activities and creating a conducive learning environment. These three communication channels directly enhance students' readiness to learn by ensuring timely information, emotional support, and a stable learning environment. This study concludes that a combination of direct communication and structured digital communication contributes significantly to learning effectiveness. These findings provide an empirical picture of communication practices in Islamic boarding schools and open up opportunities for the development of a more modern and integrated communication system.

Keywords: Communication Management; Islamic Boarding Schools; Learning Effectiveness; Digital Communication; Educational Communication

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Article History	Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
	2025-12-12	2026-07-08	2026-07-14	2026-09-15

INTRODUCTION

مقدمة

The development of Islamic educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, requires a well-managed communication system to ensure that all educational activities run effectively. In Islamic boarding schools, the relationship between caregivers, students, guardians, and the community is more complex than in formal educational institutions because it includes 24-hour supervision, character building, and educational activities that are integrated into the daily lives of students. This complexity requires structured communication management to ensure that information flows effectively. In educational communication, clear and effective information delivery is crucial to the success of the learning process and also serves as a bridge

that maintains connection and trust, as explained by Djamarah (2011) that communication is the main foundation for achieving behavioral change and understanding in students.

In Islamic educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, communication does not only take place formally in the classroom, but also through daily interactions. Several studies show that good communication management related to communication strategies, the use of digital media, and coordination with parents has a direct effect on the effectiveness of learning and educational services. Targeted educational communication can strengthen relationships between educational actors and increase transparency, especially in the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and students' guardians (Nisa, 2024). Furthermore, communication established in an educational environment cannot be separated from the process of social interaction. Mulyana (2017) emphasizes that communication is a process of conveying meaning through continuous interaction, which requires a managed pattern and mutual understanding.

Technological developments have also had a significant impact on communication patterns in Islamic educational institutions. Islamic boarding schools have begun to utilize digital media to accelerate the dissemination of information, strengthen academic coordination, and increase parental involvement in the educational process. This digitization is considered capable of improving the efficiency of education management and facilitating the supervision of students' activities (Shofwani et al., 2025). In line with this, another study notes that the integration of technology in information management helps improve the consistency of internal communication flows in Islamic boarding schools and madrasas (Sholikhah, 2019). However, this digital transformation is not evenly distributed: pesantren generally lack a formal public relations structure and dedicated digital communication personnel, so access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy among caregivers and teachers remain uneven. This digital gap is a specific and pressing problem that motivates the present study, as it directly affects how consistently information reaches students' guardians and the wider community.

However, previous studies have tended to focus on formal schools or madrasahs, while studies on communication practices in Islamic boarding schools, especially those that do not have a formal public relations division but carry out communication functions through care and committee units, are still rare. In addition, very few studies specifically address how Islamic boarding schools build communication with the surrounding community, even though this relationship often plays a role in supporting the activities of Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, there is still limited research on how communication management in Islamic boarding schools contributes directly to the effectiveness of learning, both in internal processes and in the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the guardians of students and the surrounding community.

This condition indicates a gap in research, namely the need for a study that describes the practice of data-based communication management in Islamic boarding schools, while also assessing its contribution to the effectiveness of education. This research is important because it can provide an empirical description of how Islamic boarding schools build organized communication patterns even without a formal public relations structure, as well as how these communication practices are able to meet the needs for information regularity and learning support.

Thus, this study aims to address these limitations. Several researchers have focused on educational communication strategies and the use of digital media, but few studies have directly examined communication management in Islamic boarding schools in relation to the learning

process. Therefore, this study aims to describe how communication management is implemented at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo and how these practices support the learning process. The objective of this study is to describe the form of communication management in Islamic boarding schools and its role in supporting the effectiveness of learning at the Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo.

METHOD

منهج

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study approach. This approach was chosen because the study wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of how communication management is carried out in a particular institution, namely the Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School. Case studies are particularly appropriate when researchers want to observe a practice in its entirety in the context of the institution's daily life (Yin, 2017). During the research process, the researcher did not manipulate or conduct any experiments. All information was obtained from the real experiences of participants and official documents from the boarding school. In this way, the picture produced is more natural and reflects the actual conditions in the field.

This study employed interviews as its data collection technique. Interviews were chosen because this method allows researchers to explore stories, experiences, and communication management practices directly from caregivers and teachers. Using a semi-structured approach, the researcher maintains a list of guiding questions but can follow the informant's narrative flow, resulting in richer information (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This technique is commonly used to compare verbal information with written evidence, thereby making the data more robust and reliable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The data was obtained from three key informants directly involved in the communication process at the Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School (N = 3), consisting of caregivers and teachers. They were selected using purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants based on who best understands the issues being studied. This method is suitable when researchers want to ensure that informants are truly relevant and have sufficient experience with the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participant criteria included informants who were actively involved in the communication and learning processes at the boarding school, had at least one year of experience, and were willing to provide information openly. Data collection was conducted over a two-month period through two field visits, allowing the researcher sufficient prolonged engagement to observe communication practices directly and ensure the depth and credibility of the data obtained. Responses across the three informants converged closely on most themes; therefore, to avoid redundancy, the illustrative quotations presented in the Results and Discussion sections are drawn from one representative informant whose account was corroborated by the other two.

RESULT

نتائج

The results of the study show that communication management at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School is divided into three main areas: internal communication, communication with parents, and communication with the surrounding community. All three play a direct role in supporting the smooth running of the learning process.

First, in terms of internal communication, the boarding school has a pattern of information delivery that runs from the caretakers to the teachers and then on to the students. Interviews with the administrators revealed that academic information—such as teaching schedules, evening study activities, and student evaluations—is conveyed through weekly meetings and internal WhatsApp groups. This pattern is considered to facilitate coordination between departments, including the academic and administrative departments, so that the learning process can run consistently without overlapping information.

Second, the study found that the relationship between teachers and students remains an important element in successful learning. Close interpersonal communication, such as daily guidance, feedback after learning activities, and direct dialogue when students have difficulty understanding the material, encourages a more open learning environment. Interview data shows that this approach makes students more motivated and easier to follow the learning process. This pattern was consistently reported across the interviews conducted.

Third, in terms of communication with parents, Islamic boarding schools utilize digital media such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp to convey important announcements, learning developments, and notifications about boarding school activities. The documentation results show that the use of digital media makes it easier for boarding schools to maintain transparency of information and reduce misunderstandings between the boarding school and parents. Such announcements are archived on the boarding school's official Instagram account. This channel separation was confirmed by a caregiving staff member, who explained: "For communication with students' guardians, we focus it through the caregiving department's phone number; for guests, through the leadership secretary; and for the community, through the public relations division whenever there is an event involving outside parties." The same informant added that the boarding school's social media accounts are managed by "the leadership secretariat—there are five of us," which keeps the information disseminated to guardians and the public consistent and centrally controlled.

Fourth, the study found a pattern of communication between Islamic boarding schools and the community that runs through licensing and community involvement in major boarding school events. Based on interviews, this communication relationship supports the stability of the learning environment because the community feels involved and understands the activities carried out by the boarding school. As a result, learning activities are more conducive and are not disrupted by social conflicts or miscommunication. Such events are regularly documented by the boarding school's committee.

Compared to previous studies that generally only highlight aspects of internal communication or leadership patterns in Islamic boarding schools, the findings of this study show that Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School manages communication in a broader and more integrated manner, covering internal communication, communication with parents, and communication with the community. Additionally, the results of this study indicate that Islamic boarding schools have begun to utilize digital media in a simple yet effective manner, in contrast to several studies that conclude that Islamic boarding schools still have minimal technological adaptation.

Overall, the results of the study show that the effectiveness of learning at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School is greatly influenced by the institution's ability to manage structured, open, and connected communication with all parties involved in the education of students.

Internal Communication of Islamic Boarding Schools

Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that internal communication at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School is quite effective because it takes place directly between the kyai, teachers, and students. This type of communication is characteristic of Islamic boarding schools, where instructions are given through regular forums such as recitation sessions, brief meetings before learning activities, and through daily instructions. This naturally formed communication pattern makes students accustomed to receiving instructions quickly and directly, so that the learning process can run more orderly and focused.

Direct communication has several advantages, one of which is that messages can be conveyed more clearly because there is face-to-face contact, intonation, and non-verbal expressions that help reinforce understanding. This is in line with Inah (2015) view, which emphasizes that interpersonal communication is an important factor in facilitating the learning process in an educational environment, especially when the interaction is direct and personal. Wiradana et al. (2022) also add that intensive and stable communication between teachers and students can increase student motivation and engagement, thereby improving learning outcomes.

However, communication patterns that rely too heavily on verbal delivery can be an obstacle in themselves. Information that is not recorded or documented in writing risks being altered, lost, or conveyed incompletely to teachers or students who were not present at the meeting. As a result, some policies or activity schedules are sometimes not communicated evenly. This condition leads to a lack of synchronization in the implementation of certain activities, even though interpersonal communication generally continues to run well. This is consistent with a caregiving staff member's own assessment of the biggest challenge in managing communication at the boarding school: "consistency in keeping communication running".

Therefore, it is reasonable for Islamic boarding schools to maintain traditional communication patterns that have become part of their culture, but it would be much better if they were supported by simple documentation. For example, by taking meeting notes, posting written schedules in the ustadz's room, or making announcements through internal media. This step not only strengthens existing communication but also helps prevent misunderstandings and creates order in the learning process.

External Communication of Islamic Boarding Schools

External communication at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School has been carried out through various means, such as face-to-face meetings between the boarding school and parents, verbal communication, and the use of WhatsApp groups as a medium for disseminating information. In the context of pesantren culture, face-to-face meetings with parents are still considered the most effective way to maintain emotional closeness and build mutual trust. This approach shows that the pesantren continues to uphold the social and spiritual values that form the basis of its relationship with the surrounding community. This value is reflected in how the boarding school handles guardians' complaints, which, according to a caregiving staff member, "must be done honestly, trustworthily, and using the best possible language".

However, this study also found that some guardians sometimes receive important information late. Urgent information, such as changes to activity schedules, report card

collection, or specific agendas, cannot always be received quickly by all guardians. This occurs because the process of conveying information still relies on traditional methods that lack a systematic flow.

These findings are consistent with Simbolon et al. (2023), who state that educational institutions that regularly utilize digital media are able to reduce delays in informing parents. Digital media such as instant messaging applications, official school platforms, or websites are very helpful in speeding up the flow of information. Allo et al. (2025) also emphasize that structured communication between schools and parents through digital media can increase parental involvement in monitoring their children's development.

However, the use of digital communication methods should not ignore the cultural values that have long been characteristic of Islamic boarding schools. Direct communication still plays an important role in maintaining emotional and spiritual relationships between Islamic boarding schools, guardians, and the community. In other words, a combination of traditional and digital communication can be the most balanced solution. Islamic boarding schools do not need to completely abandon old ways, but rather complement them with faster and more orderly methods so that information delivery can reach all parties equally.

The Impact of Communication Management on the Effectiveness of Islamic Boarding School Learning

This study also shows that the quality of communication at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School has a direct influence on the effectiveness of learning. Regular communication between the kyai, teachers, and students makes the process of conveying instructions easier for students to understand. When information about schedules, assignments, or changes in activities is provided clearly, students can adjust more quickly and do not experience confusion in following the lessons.

In educational theory, good communication is indeed one of the main factors that support the comfort and readiness of students to learn. Situmorang (2022) explains that interpersonal communication between teachers and students that is carried out in a clear, focused, and responsive manner can increase student activity in learning activities. This is also in line with the findings of Allo et al. (2025) who state that educational institutions with structured communication systems tend to have a more conducive and productive learning atmosphere.

Rather than the specific channels already described in the Results section, what matters theoretically here is the underlying principle: separating communicative responsibility by audience and purpose (guardians, guests, and the community) reduces message overlap and ambiguity, a mechanism organizational communication theory identifies as a key precondition for role clarity and efficient information flow. This structural separation is what allows the boarding school to sustain a significant influence on the smooth running of the learning process despite lacking a formal public relations division.

Centralizing the management of digital accounts under a single unit, as explained in the Findings section, theoretically functions as an informal gatekeeping mechanism—that is, it replaces the role of a formal public relations division by ensuring that outgoing information passes through a single point of control rather than multiple points. However, this centralization can only partially compensate for the absence of a formal public relations structure, as interview results indicate that documentation storage still needs improvement; with information scattered across various locations, the gatekeeping function is not yet balanced by centralized archiving,

meaning that some teachers or student guardians do not always have simultaneous access to the same information (Sakti & Resmi, 2020). Consolidating these archives into a single, easily accessible system would bridge the gap between how information is disseminated and how it is stored.

Communication with the students' guardians also affects the students' readiness to learn. Guardians usually contact the boarding school to inquire about their children's well-being or needs. The responses provided by the boarding school are considered friendly and clear, so that the relationship between the boarding school and the guardians remains good (Nisa, 2024). This good relationship can increase the students' sense of security and moral support, so that they are calmer and more ready to attend classes.

Internally, communication between the boarding school administration and teachers plays an important role in maintaining orderly activities. There are times when teachers experience time constraints, resulting in information not being conveyed immediately. To overcome this, the administration and teachers conduct joint evaluations and remind each other. This approach demonstrates that internal communication greatly influences the readiness of students and the smooth running of learning activities.

If there is a misunderstanding or a specific issue, the pesantren immediately provides clarification through official social media. This step is important to prevent the spread of misinformation that could disrupt the learning environment. With quick and clear clarification, learning activities can continue without interruption. As one caregiving staff member described the process: "If a misunderstanding occurs, we re-explain and clarify the intended message; if there is a particular issue, we resolve it with a special announcement or clarification through social media to unify opinion so that no unnecessary rumors spread".

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that communication management at Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School has had a positive impact and supports the learning process. The integration of information channels through social media has been implemented so that learning activities can run more optimally and evenly in both internal and external communication.

Comparison of Research Findings with Previous Research

The findings of this study make a significant contribution by confirming communication management theories and providing novelty in the form of empirical validation in the context of Islamic education.

A. Confirmation of previous theories and research

The results of the study show that strong internal communication (face-to-face and structural) is a prerequisite for effective learning in Islamic boarding schools, in line with classical organizational communication theory. The vertical communication pattern from caregivers/leaders to teachers/students, which is based on obedience and role modeling, confirms the findings of previous studies (e.g., research on charismatic leadership in religious institutions) that emphasize the importance of authority as a center of information. Furthermore, these findings partially confirm the three-role model of Digital Public Relations identified by Romadhona & Rifqi (2022) in the context of public schools. Al-Muqoddasah Islamic boarding school has implemented the role of social media as a Media for Information and Communication (using WhatsApp Groups for information for students' guardians).

B. Contribution and novelty of findings

While confirming several theories, this study contributes three significant elements of novelty:

1. Contextual Validation of Integrative Communication: This study proves that the effectiveness of learning in contemporary Islamic boarding schools is no longer sufficient with only strong traditional communication patterns. The novelty lies in the finding that a “combination” of traditional internal communication patterns and digital documentation systems (for external and internal archives) is a determining variable in improving the quality of learning (e.g., ease of access to mudzakah or evaluation results by santri guardians).
2. Identification of External Gaps that have an Internal Impact: Previous studies on Islamic boarding schools often focused on internal dynamics. The novelty of this study is that it identifies that weaknesses in external communication (documentation, branding) may indirectly hinder the pride and motivation of students (learning effectiveness) and make it more difficult for guardians to evaluate the program; this connection is inferred from the pattern of findings rather than from direct testimony, and warrants confirmation through further empirical work.
3. Communication Rigor-Based Learning Effectiveness Model: This finding argues that to achieve measurable learning effectiveness (both in memorization and character), Islamic boarding schools must shift from verbal communication to structured and documented communication. This challenges the view that verbal tradition (face-to-face) is sufficient.

Implications of Findings for the Development of Communication in Islamic Boarding Schools (Applications and Recommendations)

The finding that a neat combination of traditional and digital communication directly affects learning effectiveness has broad practical implications for the development of communication management in Islamic boarding schools and other Islamic educational institutions.

A. Implications for strengthening the management system

The finding that learning effectiveness increases with neat documentation and communication systems implies the need for operational transformation in pesantren environments:

1. Implementation of Formal Digital Communication Systems: Pesantren need to adopt software or integrated systems (such as simple Learning Management Systems or digital archiving systems) to document students' progress, rather than relying solely on manual or verbal records.
2. Standardization of Da'wah Messages and Information: External communication must be standardized and managed by a special team. This is in line with the Role of Branding/Image Building (Romadhona & Rifqi, 2022), where Islamic boarding schools need to present a credible and consistent image.
3. Investment in Digital Human Resources: The need to strengthen external communication implies the need for special training (or recruitment) for teachers responsible for public relations and documentation, in order to overcome the controversy over human resource gaps that often occurs.

B. Implications for improving learning quality

The most important implication of these findings is that communication is a component of the curriculum:

1. Improved Quality of Feedback: With documented communication (e.g., digital reports), parents can provide faster and more specific feedback, which directly affects students' motivation and learning method improvement (increasing effectiveness) (Nuzula et al., 2024).
2. Integrating Traditional and Digital Communication: Islamic boarding schools are advised not to eliminate face-to-face (traditional) patterns, but to use them as a medium for deep listening and character building, while digital media is used as a medium for reporting and documentation. This synergy will give birth to an Integrative Communication Model that is characteristic of modern Islamic boarding schools.

The role of public relations in school activities is essentially to facilitate communication and cooperation with both internal and external communities. As has been implemented by educational institutions, the public relations department is responsible for establishing good communication and cooperation with internal and external environments, providing good service to the community by providing facilities for all activities organized by the school, so that the community, especially parents, are satisfied with the services provided. The public relations department also establishes cooperation between various departments within the school. For every activity held in the surrounding area, whether organized by the government or certain agencies, the school must involve students who are capable in their fields. On the question of formalizing this role, however, a caregiving staff member suggested the current arrangement is sufficient for now: "we may not need it yet, because the boarding school only needs public relations during certain events, and we already have an event-based public relations team accustomed to handling that, since there are still many other things that need more attention than public relations, such as students' Qur'anic recitation, learning, and daily life". With this participation, a broad relationship with the general public will be established (Rais, 2019). In summary, the implication of these findings is a paradigm shift that communication in Islamic boarding schools is no longer just a means of conveying messages, but a strategic asset that must be managed formally and digitally to ensure the quality and effectiveness of education in the era of digital transformation.

CONCLUSION | خاتمة

This study successfully describes the communication management implemented at the Al-Muqoddasah Islamic Boarding School, which includes regulating the flow of information through the care unit, utilizing digital media, coordinating activity committees, and engaging with guardians and the community. This pattern indicates that the Islamic boarding school has a functional internal communication mechanism despite the lack of a formal public relations structure.

The findings of this study also indicate that communication management directly contributes to learning effectiveness. A coordinated flow of information helps educators run educational programs regularly, supports the orderliness of student activities, and strengthens the involvement of parents in the educational process. Thus, this study addresses the research objective that Islamic boarding school communication plays a strategic role in maintaining the smoothness and quality of the learning process. At a broader policy level, these findings suggest

the need for a standardized digital communication SOP that pesantren nationwide could adopt as they transition toward more structured, technology-supported management, so that institutions without a formal public relations division can still guarantee consistent, transparent, and well-documented communication with students' guardians and the surrounding community.

This study makes a novel contribution by presenting empirical evidence on how Islamic boarding schools implement communication management in the context of dormitory-based Islamic education. Further research could develop a more systematic model of Islamic boarding school communication, test the effectiveness of specific digital platforms, or compare communication patterns across different types of Islamic boarding schools. These findings are expected to form the basis for strengthening more adaptive Islamic boarding school communication and supporting the continuous improvement of learning quality.

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