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Humanistic Communication Strategies in Building Motivation for Reading and Memorizing the Qur'an Among Students at Al-Makkiyah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Jambi

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Abstract

This study investigates humanistic communication strategies employed in building motivation for reading and memorizing the Qur'an among students at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah, Jambi, Indonesia. Humanistic communication is understood as a person-centered approach that places students as individuals possessing unique needs, potentials, emotions, and experiences that deserve recognition throughout the Qur'an learning process. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with seven teachers (ustadz and ustadzah), seven students (santri), and seven Islamic education practitioners, supplemented by participatory observation and documentation of communicative interactions in reading and memorization activities. Data analysis followed a thematic reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing procedure, with triangulation used to ensure credibility. Findings reveal that humanistic communication is operationalized through three interconnected principles, namely empathic-active listening, authenticity or congruence, and unconditional positive regard, which are delivered via question-and-answer dialogues, teacher demonstration, and group discussion. These strategies contribute significantly to the development of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, ultimately encouraging consistent student engagement in Qur'anic reading and memorization. The study affirms that the success of Qur'an education is not determined solely by pedagogical method but also by the quality of relational communication constructed between educators and students. Humanistic communication thus emerges as a relevant framework for creating a Qur'anic learning environment that is dialogic, empathic, and oriented toward the holistic development of student potential.

Keywords: Humanistic communication, learning motivation, Qur'an reading, Qur'an memorization, Islamic boarding school, santri.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia occupy a central position in the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge and the cultivation of Qur'anic literacy. Among the most revered educational activities within these institutions is tahfidz, the process of committing the entire Qur'an to memory. Yet despite its spiritual significance, the persistence

of conventional, one-directional pedagogical communication has created documented challenges in sustaining student motivation across many pesantren settings. Students frequently perceive Qur'anic reading and memorization as obligatory routines rather than genuinely motivated spiritual practices, a perception that gradually erodes both engagement and retention quality.

The quality of communicative interaction between educators and students is widely acknowledged as a determinant of learning outcomes in religious education contexts (Anwar, 2019; Fitriana et al., 2021). When this interaction is dominated by mechanical instruction without emotional resonance, students may complete their memorization quotas while experiencing little intrinsic motivation to internalize the values carried by Qur'anic verses. Research conducted across various Indonesian pesantren has documented a pattern of declining motivation characterized by surface-level compliance with institutional demands, student passivity in learning sessions, and a general disconnection between the act of memorization and spiritual self-cultivation (Febriani et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2016).

Humanistic communication, a tradition rooted in Carl Rogers's person-centered therapy and later applied to educational settings, offers a theoretically grounded alternative to mechanistic instructional models. Its foundational tenets, namely unconditional positive regard, empathic understanding, and authentic self-disclosure, position the learner as an autonomous agent capable of self-actualization when placed in a supportive, non-coercive relational environment (Rogers, 1961). Within Islamic educational philosophy, these values resonate deeply with prophetic pedagogical traditions emphasizing mercy, patience, and attentiveness to individual learner conditions (Rahmat et al., 2024).

Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah, established in 2011 in Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, offers an instructive institutional case. As a modern pesantren that integrates the KMI (Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah) curriculum affiliated with the Gontor educational model, the institution explicitly pursues a vision of forming morally excellent generations while maintaining rigorous Qur'anic literacy programming. Preliminary observations suggested that teachers at this institution were beginning to shift from didactic monologue toward more dialogic and empathic communicative practices, creating conditions for examining the relationship between humanistic communication and student motivation.

Prior studies have addressed related questions, including the effectiveness of humanistic learning design in increasing student motivation (Rahmat et al., 2024), the dynamics of student motivation in tahfidz programs (Febriani et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2016), the role of interpersonal communication between teachers and students in hafalan programs (Fitriana et al., 2021), and the methods used to improve Qur'an reading motivation through tahsin techniques (Atifah, 2021; Ramli, 2022). However, the specific mechanisms through which humanistic communication principles are enacted in pesantren contexts, and the pathways through which those communicative practices translate into motivational outcomes, remain underexamined. This study addresses that gap by generating empirically grounded insights from Al-Makkiyah that may inform practice and policy across a broader range of Islamic educational institutions.

Three research objectives guide the inquiry. First, the study examines how humanistic communication is practiced at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah. Second, it explores the nature and dynamics of student motivation for reading and memorizing the Qur'an at this institution. Third, it analyzes how the application of humanistic communication contributes to improving that motivation. Together, these objectives produce a comprehensive account of the relational and pedagogical conditions that sustain or inhibit Qur'anic learning motivation in a modern Indonesian pesantren.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humanistic Communication Theory

Humanistic communication is a conceptual framework within the communication discipline that centers the dignity, values, and needs of human persons in every analytic and practical engagement with interaction. Unlike technical or mechanistic communication paradigms, humanistic theory regards communication not merely as message transmission but as a co-creative process of meaning-making that develops human potential in holistic ways (Stewart, 1978; Pearce & Cronen, 1980). The tradition builds on the philosophical assumption that humans are meaning-making beings who actively interpret their experiences through interaction, and that communication is constitutive of social reality rather than merely reflective of it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Carl Rogers is the most influential figure associated with humanistic communication principles. His person-centered approach, originally developed in the context of psychotherapy, identified three facilitative conditions essential for individual growth and learning. These are empathic understanding, or the capacity to sense accurately the internal frame of reference of another person; unconditional positive regard, an acceptance of the other without evaluation or judgment; and congruence or authenticity, which involves the communicator being genuinely present and internally consistent in what is expressed (Rogers, 1961). When these conditions are present in educational relationships, Rogers argued, students are freed to explore their potential without the inhibiting effects of fear, shame, or coercion.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a complementary theoretical lens. Maslow proposed that human motivation proceeds through hierarchically organized need levels, from physiological and safety needs through belonging, esteem, and ultimately self-actualization. In educational contexts, students who experience communicative acceptance and emotional safety are better positioned to pursue higher-order learning goals, including the spiritual actualization embodied in Qur'anic memorization (Maslow, 1954). Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence adds further explanatory purchase by demonstrating that learning outcomes depend on the capacity of educators to recognize and regulate their own emotions while remaining attuned to the emotional states of their students (Goleman, 1995). Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences rounds out the theoretical framework by underscoring the importance of differentiated communication approaches that accommodate diverse learner profiles, including linguistic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences.

Joseph DeVito's formulation of the components of humanistic communication provides a practical operationalization for this study. DeVito identifies five essential qualities in humanistic interaction, namely openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. Openness refers to the willingness to interact honestly and transparently. Empathy denotes the ability to sense and respond to another person's felt experience. Supportiveness involves a posture of non-judgment and encouragement. Positiveness reflects an optimistic, affirming orientation toward the communicative partner. Equality signals the absence of hierarchical dominance and a mutual valuing of each participant's contributions to the interaction (DeVito, 2013).

Motivation for Reading and Memorizing the Qur'an

Motivation is commonly understood as the ensemble of internal and external forces that energize, direct, and sustain human behavior toward desired goals. From a psychological standpoint, Sardiman (2016) identifies three functional dimensions of motivation in educational contexts. Motivation serves as an energy-releasing drive that initiates action, as a directional force that orients behavior toward specific objectives, and as a selective mechanism that distinguishes goal-relevant from goal-irrelevant activities. Sudarwan (2004) adds that motivation may be generated by internal factors such as desires, interests, beliefs, and emotions, as well as by external factors such as the learning environment, social support, and recognition.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a widely applied framework for distinguishing intrinsic from extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning activities. Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, is driven by external incentives such as grades, rewards, or social expectations (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the Qur'anic learning context, intrinsic motivation manifests in desires to draw closer to Allah, to fulfill religious obligations with genuine conviction, and to embody the spiritual and moral values contained in Qur'anic verses. Extrinsic motivation may take the form of parental expectations, institutional memorization targets, peer competition, or teacher-conferred rewards.

Research in pesantren settings consistently identifies a tension between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations. Studies by Ahmad (2016) and Febriani et al. (2023) document that while external factors such as parental encouragement and institutional expectations often initiate students' engagement with memorization, sustained commitment depends heavily on the development of intrinsic spiritual motivation. Several scholars note that the pedagogical environment of the pesantren, particularly the quality of teacher-student communication, plays a pivotal role in either nurturing or undermining intrinsic motivation over time (Fitriana et al., 2021; Anwar, 2019).

Factors that facilitate motivation for Qur'anic memorization include supportive social environments, emotionally warm teacher-student relationships, appropriate use of reward systems, clear goal-setting, access to competent guidance, and a conducive physical learning environment. Factors that inhibit motivation include monotonous teaching routines, excessive target pressure, inadequate mastery of foundational Arabic recitation skills, parental

disengagement, and psychological burdens associated with dense daily schedules (Febriani et al., 2023; Lathifahtunni'mah, 2024). The intersection of these facilitating and inhibiting forces creates a dynamic motivational landscape that educators must navigate with sensitivity and skill.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which was selected because the research aims to understand how humanistic communication is enacted and experienced in naturalistic pesantren settings, and how that communication shapes motivational processes that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to capture the nuance of interpersonal communication, the texture of motivational experiences, and the contextual specificity of Islamic boarding school life in ways that produce rich, holistic understanding (Muliawan, 2014).

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah, located on Jalan Lintas Tebo in Rantau Api Village, Tengah Ilir District, Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. The institution enrolls 218 students distributed across MI, MTs, and MA educational units for the 2025 to 2026 academic year, and is staffed by 38 teachers. Al-Makkiyah was selected because of its explicit commitment to a comprehensive educational model that integrates Qur'anic literacy with modern curriculum standards, its accessible location for the research team, and the institutional leadership's willingness to facilitate data collection.

Participants were purposively selected to ensure maximum variation and theoretical relevance. The primary informant group comprised seven teachers responsible for Tahfidz and Al-Qur'an programs. These included Ustadzah Annisa, Ustadzah Fitriyah (35 years, 10 years of teaching experience), Ustadzah Ita, Ustadzah Dzakiyyah (25 years, 8 years of experience), Ustadz As'ari, Ustadz Rasyid (29 years, 5 years of experience), and an additional practitioner. The student informant group comprised seven students drawn from classes X, XI, and XII at the MA level. Triangulation informants included seven practitioners in Islamic education from the broader Jambi region. All participants provided informed consent, and student participants were identified by first name only to protect privacy.

Three primary data collection methods were used. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all three participant groups. Interview guides addressed topics including communicative practices in Tahfidz sessions, perceptions of teacher-student relationships, motivational states and their antecedents, and the role of institutional environment in supporting or hindering Qur'anic learning. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was recorded with participant consent, then transcribed verbatim. Second, participatory observation of Tahfidz learning sessions, muroja'ah activities, and informal teacher-student interactions was conducted across multiple visits between July and October 2025. Field notes recorded communicative behaviors, spatial arrangements, emotional tenor, and specific episodes of motivational intervention. Third, document analysis encompassed institutional records including the pesantren profile, vision and mission statements, teacher credentials, student enrollment data, program schedules, and historical records.

Data analysis followed the three-stage procedure of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing associated with Miles and Huberman (1994). In the reduction stage, raw interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were coded thematically, with initial codes organized into broader categories aligned with the study's three research questions. In the display stage, thematic matrices and narrative summaries were constructed to facilitate cross-case comparison across participant groups and data sources. In the conclusion stage, patterns and relationships identified across categories were interpreted against the theoretical frameworks of humanistic communication and motivation theory, leading to substantive findings and implications.

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation, comparing insights from teachers, students, and practitioners; method triangulation, cross-referencing interview data with observational field notes and documentary evidence; and member checking, in which key findings were reviewed with selected informants to verify accuracy of interpretation. The researcher also engaged in extended observation to deepen contextual understanding and minimize the distortions introduced by brief, decontextualized data collection. Supervisor review at the thesis stage provided an additional layer of credibility, dependability, and confirmability verification.

RESULTS

Institutional Profile and Communication Context

Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah was founded in 2011 by Muhammad Rivicky, S.Pd.I under the auspices of a community-owned foundation registered under Notaris Number 239/G/RB/VI/2021. The institution operates under the direction of Muinudin and has received a B accreditation rating. Its educational vision articulates the aspiration to develop a generation marked by noble character (akhlakul karimah), shaped through Rasulullah's prophetic method of nurturing (tarbiyah), capable of embodying Ulul Al-Bab qualities, and equipped to uphold Islamic values as a mercy for all creation. The institutional mission includes strengthening faith and piety toward Allah SWT, equipping students with foundational Islamic knowledge drawn from original sources, and developing communicative competencies in international languages.

The pesantren's educational ethos is expressed through five core values, namely sincerity (keikhlasan), simplicity (kesederhanaan), self-reliance (berdikari), Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), and freedom of thought within Islamic boundaries (berfikir bebas). These values create a distinctive institutional culture that shapes communicative norms between educators and students. The emphasis on sincerity and brotherhood in particular generates an expectation of authenticity and genuine care in teacher-student interaction that resonates strongly with humanistic communication principles. The KMI curriculum, affiliated with the Gontor model, further establishes standards of Arabic-medium instruction, comprehensive character formation, and community-based learning that embed communicative interaction within a spiritually rich pedagogical environment.

At the time of data collection, the institution enrolled 96 male students and 122 female students across three educational levels, with 38 teachers distributed across MI, MTs, and MA

programs. The Tahfidz Al-Qur'an program operates as a core component of the curriculum, with daily sessions structured around setoran (presentation of new memorized portions) and muroja'ah (repetition of previously memorized portions). Physical spaces used for memorization activities include the mosque, classroom areas, garden surroundings, and dormitory rooms, allowing diverse environmental contexts for practice.

Humanistic Communication Practices at Al-Makkiyah

The analysis of interview data, observational records, and institutional documents reveals that humanistic communication at Al-Makkiyah is enacted through three interconnected principles, each corresponding to Roger's foundational triad of effective relational conditions.

Empathic Listening and Responsive Dialogue

The most pervasive communicative practice identified across teacher informants is empathic listening, the sustained effort to understand student experiences from within the student's own frame of reference without imposing external judgment. All teacher informants described deliberate practices of attending to students' emotional states before and during Tahfidz sessions. Student informants confirmed that teachers created accessible channels for personal communication outside formal class hours, including time in the mosque, in dormitory areas, and through digital messaging when physical access was not immediately possible.

Ustadzah Annisa articulated the relational philosophy underlying this practice in the following terms:

"Communication between teacher and students is indeed the key element in the success of the educational process at our pesantren. The Tahfidz program demands consistency, discipline, and high commitment from students, and effective communication helps build all of that. In our pesantren, our relationship with students is not merely formal as teacher and student but also reflects a deep spiritual and moral bond. We see students as part of a large family. We are often engaged in open dialogue, listening to their challenges, giving moral advice, and sharing inspiration from Qur'anic verses. This helps students feel supported, so they are more motivated to maintain consistency and discipline in memorization. For example, through daily communication, we can identify when a student needs extra encouragement, which ultimately strengthens their commitment to the Tahfidz process."

Students confirmed this orientation. Aghnia and Aisya, both students in the MA program, reported that teachers communicated with them in a genuine and sincere manner, never discriminating between students, and consistently creating opportunities for dialogue about memorization progress and personal difficulties in spaces beyond the formal classroom, including the mosque, dormitory rooms, and garden areas of the pesantren.

This communicative openness aligns with DeVito's (2013) openness component of humanistic communication and operationalizes Rogers's (1961) empathic understanding in educational practice. From a Maslovian perspective, the relational safety created by non-judgmental listening satisfies students' needs for belonging and esteem, positioning them to pursue the higher-order spiritual actualization that memorization of the Qur'an represents.

Authenticity and Personal Disclosure

Authenticity in humanistic communication requires communicators to be genuinely present, internally consistent, and willing to share personal experience in ways that connect the communicative content to lived reality. At Al-Makkiyah, teachers demonstrated authenticity through a consistent practice of opening Tahfidz sessions with personal testimonies about the role of Qur'anic verses in their own lives, including experiences of facing bereavement, financial hardship, and professional stress. These disclosures were delivered in informal formats such as brief muhadhoroh or small-group discussion, creating an emotional connection between the abstract content of Qur'anic verses and the concrete challenges students face in adolescence.

Ustadzah Fitriyah, a 35-year-old teacher with ten years of experience, described her practice as follows:

"As a teacher, I always begin Tahfidz sessions by sharing personal stories about how the Qur'an has changed my life. For example, when I faced financial difficulties in my family during my youth, the memorized verses of Surah Al-Imran gave me spiritual strength and motivation to remain patient and work hard. I share this with students through a brief muhadhoroh, where I also ask about their experiences, so they feel heard and connected. This makes them more enthusiastic because they see Tahfidz not merely as memorization but as a tool for facing life's challenges, as I experienced."

Ustadz Rasyid similarly described how sharing how specific Qur'anic verses helped him manage occupational stress enabled students to reconceptualize memorization as a personally relevant coping resource rather than an institutional requirement. Student informant Risa confirmed the impact of this approach, noting that teacher openness and honesty created a sense of being supported and respected as a person rather than merely as a student expected to follow rules. She also reported that when memorization routines felt monotonous, the authentic personal orientation of teachers helped overcome the sense of tedium.

This finding aligns with Rogers's (1961) congruence principle and with research by Nur'aeni et al. (2024) demonstrating that humanistic approaches that connect learning to authentic human experience produce significant improvements in student learning quality. The practice also operationalizes Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework by showing how teachers' capacity for self-disclosure and emotional authenticity creates conditions for students' own emotional engagement with learning content.

Unconditional Positive Regard and Supportive Acceptance

The third humanistic communication principle identified in the data is unconditional positive regard, the acceptance of students as they are without negative evaluation of errors in memorization or slower rates of progress. This principle was actualized at Al-Makkiyah through specific practices including the provision of dedicated consultation time, the replacement of physical punishment or verbal criticism with constructive support, the differentiation of memorization targets according to individual capacity, and the availability of teachers through multiple channels for students requiring additional guidance.

Student Putri, a twelfth-grade student, described the experience of unconditional acceptance in direct terms:

"Here we are accepted as we are, without having to fear if there is a mistake in memorization or if our learning process is slow. This approach is very different from physical punishment or negative words one might encounter elsewhere. Even when there are mistakes or obstacles, the teachers give more positive support, so we feel comfortable and safe to try again and learn more deeply."

Teachers confirmed this orientation. Ustadzah Dzakiyyah, who described her approach to student fatigue as an opportunity for empathic inquiry rather than corrective pressure, explained:

"In daily interaction, I focus on building trust through empathy and two-way dialogue. For example, when a student experiences boredom, I ask directly 'What makes you tired today?' and I listen without interruption, then I share personal tips such as taking a short break with dhikr to restore motivation. This makes students feel valued, open, and they memorize faster because they learn to manage their own emotions rather than merely following rules."

Teachers also provided specialized consultation time, made themselves available via telephone and short messages for students encountering difficulties, and explicitly adjusted memorization targets to individual learning paces, offering flexible options ranging from full tahfidz to setoran bi nadzr (reading-based review). This flexibility, grounded in recognition of individual difference, corresponds directly to DeVito's (2013) equality component and to Maslow's (1954) emphasis on meeting students' safety and belonging needs as prerequisites for higher learning engagement.

Communication Methods in Tahfidz Practice

Beyond the three relational principles described above, the study documents three primary pedagogical methods through which humanistic communication is operationalized in Tahfidz sessions at Al-Makkiyah. These methods were described consistently across teacher informants and confirmed through observational data.

The question-and-answer method is employed to monitor student comprehension and address difficulties in a dialogic, non-coercive manner. Rather than directing students toward predetermined answers, teachers used questioning to surface individual understanding, identify points of difficulty, and invite students to articulate their own approaches to memorization challenges. This method enacts the openness and equality components of humanistic communication by distributing communicative agency more evenly between teacher and student.

The demonstration method involves the teacher showing effective memorization techniques through personal modeling. This includes demonstrating proper tajwid articulation, showing how to segment a verse for incremental memorization, and modeling the use of repetition schedules. Demonstration functions as a form of authentic knowledge-sharing that bridges theory and practice and enables students to observe competence enacted in a non-threatening way.

The discussion method facilitates the exchange of ideas, experiences, and strategies among students within a structured yet supportive communicative frame. Group discussion sessions allow students to share personal approaches to difficult verses, offer peer encouragement, and collaboratively develop memorization strategies. This method enacts the social learning dimensions of Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework and creates the conditions of peer relatedness identified in SDT as essential to sustained intrinsic motivation.

Ustadz As'ari articulated the rationale for this tri-method approach clearly:

"I use a question-and-answer method to monitor student understanding and solve problems encountered. I use the demonstration method to show effective ways of memorizing the Qur'an. And I use the discussion method to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences among students."

Motivational Dynamics Among Al-Makkiyah Students

Analysis of student interview data reveals a complex and dynamic motivational landscape shaped by the interaction of internal and external forces. The study identifies both persistent motivational challenges and the conditions under which these challenges are addressed.

Baseline Motivational Challenges

At the time of data collection, a significant proportion of students reported experiencing motivation that was primarily externally anchored. Students described perceiving Qur'anic reading and memorization primarily as institutional obligations rather than as personally meaningful spiritual practices. This perception reflects what SDT theorists identify as introjected or externally regulated motivation, in which behavior is driven by compliance rather than autonomous choice. Student Siti Amanah articulated the challenge clearly, identifying as inhibiting factors the tendency to view memorization as a burden producing psychological unreadiness, insufficient attention to verses that felt familiar leading to reduced focus, incomplete mastery of tajwid rules, absence of personally tailored memorization strategies, inconsistency in muroja'ah practice, and the spiritual dimensions of personal conduct that affect memory retention.

Student Azkiya attributed motivational difficulty to the combined effects of monotonous routine, stress from a dense schedule, unsupportive environmental conditions, and a generalized absence of intrinsic drive. She noted that social support from peers, family, and the pesantren environment were among the most effective responses to these challenges. Student Tiara similarly identified laziness as a primary inhibitor but credited the consistent encouragement of teachers, friends, and parents with restoring her enthusiasm.

These student accounts reflect the motivational pattern described in the theoretical literature, in which externally imposed expectations create initial compliance without generating the intrinsic motivation necessary for sustained, high-quality engagement. The data suggest that a significant proportion of students were operating in what Maslow (1954) would characterize as the deficiency-motivation zone, where unmet needs for belonging, recognition, and psychological safety constrained higher-level motivational development.

Internal Motivational Resources

Despite these baseline challenges, the study identifies robust internal motivational resources among students when appropriate conditions are created. Initial sincerity of intention toward Allah SWT emerged as the single most frequently cited intrinsic motivational factor. Students who had internalized the spiritual value of memorization as a personal religious commitment reported greater consistency in practice, greater resilience in the face of difficulty, and a more positive orientation toward the repetitive demands of muroja'ah. This finding aligns with Islamic motivational theory, which identifies niyyah (intention) as the foundational driver of religiously motivated behavior, and with SDT research demonstrating that self-endorsed values produce more durable behavioral engagement than external incentives.

Additional internal motivational resources identified include a genuine love for the Qur'an that developed through sustained immersive practice, a sense of pride in incremental achievement, aspirations to achieve distinguished status as a Hafidz or Hafizha, and the cognitive benefits of memorization including improved concentration, memory capacity, and academic performance. Students who had identified role models in senior students or alumni who had completed memorization programs also showed higher levels of aspirational motivation, suggesting that prosocial identification with achieved exemplars is a significant intrinsic motivational mechanism in this context.

External Motivational Resources and the Role of Communication

External motivational resources are numerous and multifaceted. Parental support emerged as the most consistently cited external motivational factor. Students Siti Amanah and Ayu Amelia Sari specifically identified the image of parental sacrifice and economic effort as a motivational trigger activated particularly in moments of declining enthusiasm. Peer relationships also played a significant role, both through healthy competitive dynamics and through mutual encouragement and collaborative memorization practice.

Critically, the study demonstrates that the quality of teacher-student communication mediates the effectiveness of all external motivational resources. Students who experienced their teachers as empathic, authentic, and accepting consistently reported higher levels of motivation, greater willingness to persist through difficulty, and more positive perceptions of their own capacity to succeed. This mediating role of communicative quality aligns with the theoretical proposition that humanistic communication operationalizes the social relatedness dimension identified in SDT as essential to intrinsic motivation development.

The institutional reward system at Al-Makkiyah, which includes tangible prizes such as Mushafs, trophies, and monetary allowances in addition to verbal praise, was identified by multiple students as an effective short-term motivational support. However, teacher informants consistently emphasized that rewards were most effective when embedded within a communicative relationship characterized by genuine recognition of individual progress rather than competitive ranking, suggesting that the relational context of reward delivery shapes its motivational impact.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study generate several theoretically significant insights that contribute to the existing literature on humanistic communication in Islamic education and on the motivational dynamics of Qur'anic learning.

The central finding that humanistic communication, enacted through empathic listening, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard, contributes substantially to student motivation for Qur'anic reading and memorization extends prior work on interpersonal communication in pesantren settings (Fitriana et al., 2021) by specifying the relational mechanisms through which communicative quality translates into motivational outcomes. Where Fitriana et al. (2021) demonstrated a positive association between communication intensity and motivation levels, the present study illuminates the psychological processes mediating that association. These processes include the satisfaction of safety and belonging needs that unlock higher-order motivational orientations, the development of self-efficacy through consistent positive regard and differentiated feedback, and the internalization of values through authentic teacher modeling.

The study's identification of three humanistic communication methods, question-and-answer dialogue, demonstration, and group discussion, provides a practically useful specification of how abstract relational principles are translated into concrete pedagogical action. This specification addresses a gap in prior humanistic education research in Islamic contexts that has tended to articulate principles without detailing their instructional operationalization (Rahmat et al., 2024; Anwar, 2019; Nur'aeni et al., 2024). The three-method framework may be adopted and adapted by practitioners in other pesantren settings as a starting point for structured communicative intervention.

The finding that authenticity through personal disclosure is a particularly effective communicative strategy with adolescent santri offers an important qualification to assumptions about appropriate communicative distance in traditional Islamic teacher-student relationships. The data suggest that students do not perceive appropriate personal disclosure as a breach of pedagogical authority but rather as evidence of genuine care and spiritual credibility. When teachers share how specific Qur'anic verses sustained them through personal difficulty, students interpret this not as an invitation to reduce reverence but as evidence that memorization produces concrete, transferenceable life resources. This reframing of the memorization activity from institutional compliance to personal transformation resource is a significant motivational mechanism that operates through communicative authenticity.

The dynamic between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation documented in this study reflects and elaborates findings from Ahmad (2016) and Febriani et al. (2023) regarding the dual-motivational architecture of Qur'anic learning in Indonesian pesantren. The present study adds to this picture by demonstrating that humanistic communication practices can actively shift the balance toward intrinsic motivation over time. When students repeatedly experience their individual learning trajectories being acknowledged without negative comparison to peers, and when they encounter teachers whose visible personal engagement with the Qur'an embodies the spiritual value that memorization is intended to cultivate, the externally

anchored motivation that characterizes many students' initial orientation gradually acquires intrinsic dimensions.

This motivational development process can be interpreted through Maslow's (1954) hierarchical framework as a progressive movement from deficiency-motivated compliance toward growth-motivated actualization. The communicative conditions created by humanistic practices at Al-Makkiyah, including safety from judgment, belonging through relational warmth, and recognition of individual achievement, create the psychological foundation upon which higher-order motivational orientations can develop. This interpretation also aligns with SDT's identification of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the three psychological needs whose satisfaction drives intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Each of the three humanistic communication principles identified in this study can be mapped onto one or more of these SDT needs, with unconditional positive regard supporting autonomy and relatedness, authenticity supporting competence through modeling and value clarification, and empathic listening supporting all three simultaneously.

The study also documents persistent structural challenges that constrain the full realization of humanistic communication practices at Al-Makkiyah. These include the tension between individual-paced learning and institutional memorization targets, the time demands imposed by large student-to-teacher ratios, and the difficulty of maintaining consistent empathic engagement across the diversity of student needs and personal circumstances. These challenges are not unique to Al-Makkiyah but are systemic features of institutional Islamic education settings more broadly, and they underline the importance of institutional support structures including teacher training in communication skills, systematic scheduling of consultation time, and clear policy frameworks that prioritize relational quality alongside quantitative memorization achievement.

A further noteworthy finding concerns the role of the physical and social environment of the pesantren in supporting or undermining humanistic communication. The diversity of spaces in which teacher-student communication occurs at Al-Makkiyah, including formal classroom areas, the mosque, garden spaces, and dormitory rooms, creates a communicative ecology that extends humanistic principles beyond scheduled instructional time into the texture of daily institutional life. This spatial extension of humanistic communication is theoretically significant because it suggests that relational quality in Islamic educational institutions is not reducible to pedagogical technique applied during lesson time but is embedded in the broader communicative culture of the institution. Creating and sustaining that culture requires intentional institutional leadership and consistent modeling of humanistic values at all levels of the institutional hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that humanistic communication, enacted through empathic listening, authentic personal disclosure, and unconditional positive regard, plays a substantive and irreplaceable role in building student motivation for reading and memorizing the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Makkiyah, Jambi. The three communicative principles identified are not merely supplementary features of effective teaching but constitutive

conditions for the motivational development that sustained Qur'anic literacy requires. By operationalizing these principles through question-and-answer dialogue, teacher demonstration, and collaborative discussion, teachers at Al-Makkiyah create communicative environments in which students' intrinsic spiritual motivation is cultivated alongside their technical memorization skills.

The study affirms that the success of Qur'anic education cannot be fully explained by reference to pedagogical method alone. The quality of relational communication between educator and student shapes the psychological conditions under which memorization either becomes a burdensome institutional obligation or evolves into a personally meaningful spiritual practice. This insight has direct implications for teacher preparation and professional development in Indonesian pesantren, suggesting that training in empathic communication, self-disclosure, and constructive feedback delivery should be considered an integral component of tahfidz teacher education rather than an optional enrichment.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study draws on data from a single institutional site, and its findings may not generalize without adaptation to pesantren with different educational models, student demographics, or institutional cultures. The research was conducted during a specific temporal window in an institution that was already demonstrating some adoption of humanistic communicative orientations, which may produce a somewhat optimistic portrait of what is achievable. Future research should employ comparative designs across multiple pesantren with varying degrees of humanistic communication practice adoption, and longitudinal methods capable of tracking motivational change over time. Quantitative studies measuring the strength of associations between specific communicative behaviors and student motivation and memorization outcomes would also significantly strengthen the evidentiary basis for practitioner recommendations.

For pesantren practitioners, the study recommends the following considerations. Teachers should be given institutional encouragement and structured time to develop authentic personal narratives about their own Qur'anic engagement that can be shared appropriately with students. Consultation systems should be formalized and adequately resourced to ensure that students have genuine access to empathic support when motivation falters. Reward systems should be designed to recognize individual progress relative to personal baselines rather than competitive ranking against peers. Institutional leadership should model humanistic communicative values in interactions with teaching staff, recognizing that the relational culture of the institution begins at the top of the organizational hierarchy. These recommendations, grounded in empirical evidence from Al-Makkiyah, offer an actionable pathway toward the dialogic, empathic, and human-centered Qur'anic educational environment that Islamic pedagogical tradition envisions.

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