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Research Article

Leadership Communication Techniques in Shaping the Leadership Character of Students through the Steady Chess Program at the Daarul Muhsinin Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the communication techniques employed by the leadership of Pondok Pesantren Modern Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Labuhanbatu in shaping the leadership character of students through the "*Catur Mantap*" program consisting of four core aspects: Mantap Ibadahku, Mantap Akhlakku, Mantap Belajarku, and Mantap Bahasaku. Utilizing a qualitative field research approach, data were collectessd through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that pesantren leaders apply multi-strategic communication techniques, including interpersonal, group, symbolic, and instructional communication. These approaches align with both Islamic communication principles shidq (truthfulness), tabligh (clarity in message), amanah (trustworthiness), and fathonah (wisdom) and modern communication theory, especially DeVito's effective communication model (openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality). The communication strategies were proven to be effective in building emotional bonds, enhancing student participation, and internalizing moral and spiritual values. Moreover, they serve as transformative tools in character education and leadership development. This study contributes to the practical and theoretical understanding of Islamic educational leadership communication and offers a replicable model for other Islamic institutions.

Keywords: Communication Techniques; Leadership Character; Catur Mantap; Islamic Education; Effective Communication

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of Islamic education, communication plays a strategic role not only as a medium for conveying messages, but also as a means of forming students' morals and character in accordance with Islamic teachings. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of good communication, as in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 83 which orders Muslims to speak well to others. Wahbah az-Zuhaili in Tafsir al-Munir and al-Maraghi states that polite communication reflects the value of ihsan, which has an impact on improving social conditions and community life (Dar al-Fikr, 2000). Furthermore, QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 31–33 shows that language skills are the basis of the education process and the formation of human identity. This is reinforced in the perspective of social sciences through George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism theory which states that a person's self-concept is formed through interaction and communication with others (Mead, 2019). Thus, communication becomes the main foundation in forming a person with character, not only in the social dimension but also spiritually.In the framework of educational communication, DeVito (2019) through the Theory of Effective Communication emphasizes that communication will be effective if it fulfills the elements of openness, empathy, supportive attitude, positive attitude, and equality. These five elements are in line with the principles of communication in Islam which include shidq (honest), tabligh (conveying), amanah (trustworthy), and fathonah (wise), as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Shihab, 2000). This means that communication in Islamic education is not just a technical means, but also contains deep ethical and spiritual dimensions.

The importance of communication in education has also been proven by various previous studies. Nashor (2014) found that effective teacher communication techniques can increase student motivation and learning achievement. Putra (2022) emphasized the role of Scout leader communication in shaping student discipline and responsibility. Nasor (2013) stated that a dialogical and participatory communication approach can encourage social change. Meanwhile, Zaenuri (2017)

showed that persuasive communication in teaching has an impact on changing students' attitudes and understanding of the values taught. Even in a non-educational context, Sari (2021) proved that a coercive communication style in a health campaign has an impact on changing people's behavior. However, although many studies highlight the importance of communication in an educational context, not many have specifically examined how the communication techniques of Islamic boarding school leaders are applied in shaping the leadership character of students based on Islamic communication principles. In this context, the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Labuhanbatu is an interesting object to study because it has a superior Catur Mantap program consisting of: steady worship, steady morals, steady learning, and steady speech. This program is designed to form students who are not only superior in spiritual and intellectual aspects, but also have moral integrity and good communication skills as prospective leaders of the community. The role of communication between Islamic boarding school leaders, ustaz, and students is the main key to the success of this program.

Therefore, this study is important to answer two main questions, namely: How are the communication techniques of the leaders of the Daarul Muhsinin Modern Islamic Boarding School applied in shaping the leadership character of students through the Catur Mantap program. Are the communication techniques used in accordance with the principles of Islamic communication. By answering these two questions, this study aims to analyze the communication techniques of Islamic boarding school leaders in shaping the character of prospective leaders through the Catur Mantap program, and evaluate the suitability of these communication techniques with communication values in Islam. This study not only provides theoretical contributions to the study of Islamic educational communication, but also has practical value in developing effective communication patterns to shape a generation with character and leadership in the Islamic boarding school environment.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with a field study approach, which seeks to explore data in depth from the research subjects in the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanahan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School, Labuhanbatu. This qualitative research focuses on collecting and analyzing data in the form of words, actions, and human interactions without quantifying them (Afrizal, 2014:13). The data collection techniques used included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The research informants were determined by purposive sampling, namely people who were selected based on certain criteria that were considered the most understanding and relevant to the focus of the research, namely Buya Harri Muktasar as the leader of the boarding school, educators, education staff, as well as students and students. The research was carried out from April to May 2025, with the stages of activities contained in the time plan table. Data collection began with location observation, then interviews with related parties, and collection of official documents of the lodge. The data source consists of primary data obtained directly from the main informants, such as the leaders of the boarding school and educators who understand the concept and practice of "Catur Mantap Santri" as a character builder. Secondary data was obtained from students, the surrounding community, as well as relevant books and journals, as a reinforcement and complement of information from primary data.

The instruments used in data collection include questionnaires, interview guidelines, observation guides, and document recording forms. In the implementation of interviews, unstructured interview methods are used, both directed and undirected, to dig up broader and deeper information. Observation is carried out in a participatory manner to see firsthand the practices and activities of the figures or objects being studied. The documentation study was carried out to complement the data from interviews and observations, by examining official documents, writings, and personal or institutional archives of Islamic boarding schools. Data analysis is carried out through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and verification or drawing conclusions. Data reduction is done by summarizing and focusing on important things that are relevant to the formulation of the problem. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a narrative description so that the relationship between the categories can be understood clearly. The verification process is carried out continuously to test the validity of the provisional conclusions until a valid and consistent conclusion is obtained. To maintain the validity of the data, triangulation techniques are used—both triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure the truth and credibility of the data obtained during the research process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Leadership Communication Techniques in the Mantap Chess Program

The results of the study showed that the leaders of the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School in Labuhanbatu applied various communication techniques in the implementation *of the Catur Mantap* program, which consisted of *Mantap Ibadahku, Mantap Akhlakku, Mantap Belajarku, and Mantap Bahasaku*. The communication techniques used by Islamic boarding school leaders are multi-strategic, involving verbal and nonverbal approaches, as well

as formal and informal in the process of forming the character of students.nIslamic boarding school leaders use interpersonal communication techniques through a direct and open approach to students. This communication is carried out in the form of daily dialogue, regular evaluation, and spiritual guidance. This approach is in accordance with the elements of openness and empathy in DeVito's theory of effective communication, as well as internalizing the values of tabligh (conveying the truth) and amanah (trustworthiness).

"Every morning before learning starts, the leader always greets and gives short directions. It makes us feel cared for and motivated," said one of the students.

Group communication techniques are carried out in *halaqah* activities, student meetings, and *Catur Mantap* program activities. In the forum, pesantren leaders used a participatory and persuasive communication style, by opening a discussion space and encouraging students to express their opinions. This technique is in line with the principles of equality and positive thinking in effective communication, and reflects the values of wisdom and fathonah. Symbolic communication techniques are seen in the form of exemplary Islamic boarding school leaders, both in worship, discipline, and social ethics. This reinforces George Herbert Mead's statement in the theory of symbolic interactionism that characters are formed through observation and symbolic interaction with authoritative figures. The leader of the cottage became a direct model in *my steadfast morals* and *steadfast worship*. In the *Mantap Belajarku* and *Mantap Bahasaku program*, Islamic boarding school leaders use instructional communication techniques based on advice methods, direct direction, and Islamic storytelling (stories of prophets and scholars). This supports the internalization of values and strengthens the leadership character of students through strengthening self-concept and moral responsibility.

The analysis of the communication techniques applied by the leaders of the pesantren shows a strong conformity with the principles of Islamic communication, namely: Islamic boarding school leaders uphold the value of honesty in conveying information to students, including in providing evaluation and criticism. This honest communication has an impact on the formation of the integrity of students as prospective leaders. Trust between leaders and students is built through commitment to promises and consistency in action. This creates a supportive educational climate and encourages a sense of responsibility for students. The communication techniques used always take into account the psychological condition and maturity of students' thinking. The persuasive and educational approach is carried out with gentleness and not coercion. Islamic boarding school leaders actively convey Islamic messages, moral values, and leadership ethics systematically in every activity of the Catur Mantap program, making communication a da'wah medium that forms a whole character. The communication techniques of the leaders of the Daarul Muhsinin Modern Islamic Boarding School have proven to be effective and in accordance with the theory of symbolic interactionism and effective communication. Communication is not only positioned as a medium of conveying messages, but as a tool for transforming values and character, which is directed at the formation of Muslim leaders who are moral, intelligent, and communicative.

3.2 Conformity of Communication Techniques with Islamic Communication Principles

Based on the results of observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation at the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School in Labuhanbatu, it was found that the communication techniques applied by Islamic boarding school leaders in general are very in line with Islamic communication principles. Communication is not only used as a means of conveying information, but also as a medium for character development and internalization of Islamic values in students. Islamic boarding school leaders always uphold honesty in conveying direction, reprimands, and motivation to students. There is no attempt at manipulation or sweetening of misleading words, but rather an emphasis on conveying things that are as they are but still polite.

"The leader is if he reprimands the students, be honest. As it is. But never anger that hurts your heart. He is honest because he loves us," said one of the senior students.

This principle of shidq is also strengthened by the habituation of an open dialogue culture that encourages students to be honest with themselves and their environment. Leadership communication techniques also emphasize the aspect of consistency between speech and action, which builds trust among students. The promises made to students are always kept, both in terms of awards, sanctions, and other policies. This creates respect and confidence that every message from the leader is trustworthy and serves as a guideline for behavior. In delivering advice, pesantren leaders use educational and contextual approaches, in accordance with the psychological condition, age, and maturity of the students' thinking. Communication is delivered persuasively and empathetically, avoiding coercive or authoritarian styles, except in the case of certain disciplines that require assertiveness. This technique is very much in accordance with the value of fathonah, which is to convey the truth with wisdom and wisdom. Leaders consistently convey moral, religious, and leadership messages in various moments, such as Friday sermons, daily meetings, to routine taklim assemblies. The delivery is

carried out in a clear, systematic, and relevant language to the life of the students, so that these values can be accepted and practiced directly by the students. Although not explicitly classified in communication theory, the principles of ihsan and rahmah (compassion) are central to the way leaders greet, reprimand, or encourage students. The communication style used is full of gentleness and attention, as exemplified by the Prophet PBUH.

"Ustaz here, if you reprimand us, it is like a father to a child. Sometimes we are ashamed of ourselves, not afraid," explained one of the male students.

In practice, the communication of Islamic boarding school leaders also meets the principles of effective communication according to DeVito, such as openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, and equality. Students are given space to express their opinions, convey problems, and even criticize internal conditions politely. This reflects the existence of the culture of mushawarah and ukhuwah, which are important principles in Islam. By referring to Islamic communication theory (Shihab, 2000), symbolic interactionism theory (Mead, 2019), and effective communication theory (DeVito, 2019), it can be concluded that the communication techniques applied by the leadership of the Daarul Muhsinin Modern Islamic Boarding School have fulfilled the principles of Islamic communication substantially and applicatively. It is the main medium in shaping the character of students, both in terms of spirituality, morality, and leadership responsibility. Providing concrete examples of the application of Islamic communication in the pesantren-based education system, through *the Catur Mantap* program.

3.3 Communication Techniques Used in the Catur Mantap Program

Based on the results of in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, the leaders of Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School applied four main types of communication techniques in implementing the *Catur Mantap* program: **Interpersonal, Group, Symbolic**, and **Instructional Communication**. The frequency of each communication technique used is illustrated in the chart below:

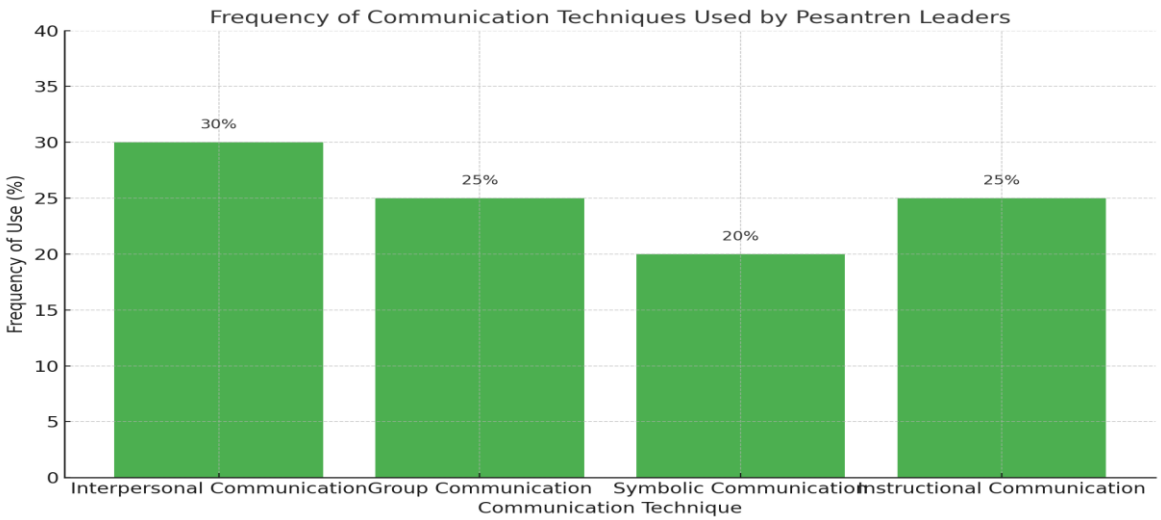

Figure 1. Frequency of Comunication Techniques Used by Pesanter Leaders

As shown in the chart:

1. Interpersonal Communication (30%) is the most frequently used technique, applied through daily direct dialogue, spiritual guidance, and personalized evaluation.
2. Group Communication (25%) is implemented during halaqah, student assemblies, and leadership forums.
3. Symbolic Communication (20%) includes modeling good behavior in worship, discipline, and social ethics by the pesantren leaders.
4. Instructional Communication (25%) is used during learning sessions through storytelling, direct briefing, and moral education.

This distribution shows a balanced multi-strategic approach, indicating the pesantren's commitment to not only educating cognitively, but also shaping spiritual and moral identity.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Communication Techniques of the Leaders of the Modern Islamic Boarding School Daarul Muhsinin Promise of Labuhanbatu Wire in Shaping the Character of Prospective Leaders Through *the Catur Mantap Program*

The results of the study show that the leadership of the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School in Labuhanbatu has applied strategic and structured communication techniques in supporting the implementation of *the Catur Mantap* program which includes *Mantap Ibadahku, Mantap Akhlakku, Mantap Belajarku,* and *Mantap Bahasaku*. The communication techniques used by Islamic boarding school leaders not only function as a means of conveying messages, but also as a medium for value transformation, character formation, and coaching of the leadership spirit of students as a whole. These findings reinforce the background that in Islamic education, communication plays a role as the main method in forming a person with noble and civilized character. Interpersonal communication techniques used by pesantren leaders are seen in the form of daily dialogues, spiritual guidance, and open evaluation to students. This model is in line with the theory of effective communication by DeVito (2019), which emphasizes the importance of the elements of openness and empathy. This principle also reflects the values of Islamic communication such as *tabligh* (conveying honestly and clearly) and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which are characteristic of the Prophet's communication.

In the context of group communication, such as in *halaqah activities* and student meetings, pesantren leaders apply a participatory and persuasive communication model. This technique is not one-way, but dialogical, providing a space for discussion and encouraging active participation from students. This pattern is in line with the principles of equality (*musawah*) and supportiveness in effective communication, and illustrates the value *of fathonah* (wisdom) and *wisdom* in Islamic teachings. This is also consistent with the theory of symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead (2019), which asserts that the individual's self-concept is formed from meaningful social interactions with authoritative figures. Meanwhile, symbolic communication techniques can be seen from the example of leaders in the aspects of worship, discipline, and social ethics. Leaders become role models who indirectly convey character messages through real actions. This approach strengthens the internalization of values in *the Mantap Ibadahku* and *Mantap Akhlakku* programs. As explained in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 31–33, communication skills and the use of language are important foundations in education and the formation of human identity. In the implementation *of Mantap Belajarku* and *Mantap Bahasaku*, pesantren leaders adopt instructional communication techniques based on advice, direct briefing, and Islamic *storytelling*. The stories of prophets and scholars are used as an effective medium of moral education, not only in the cognitive aspect, but also affectively and spiritually. This makes communication a means of da'wah that touches the psychological dimension of students.

The effectiveness of the communication techniques of the pesantren leaders was strengthened by a number of previous studies. Nashor (2014) shows that good teacher communication techniques can improve student learning achievement. Putra (2022) emphasized that participatory coach communication is able to shape student discipline and responsibility. Zaenuri (2017) proves that persuasive communication techniques in teaching have a positive impact on students' attitudes. Even in different social contexts, Nasution and Sari (2021) prove that even coercive communication can influence behavior, which shows how much influence communication strategies have on the formation of individual attitudes and responses. Thus, it can be concluded that the communication techniques of the leaders of the Daarul Muhsinin Modern Islamic Boarding School are very relevant and effective in shaping the character of students as prospective leaders of the people. The communication techniques applied not only meet the principles of effective communication in DeVito's version, but are also in harmony with Islamic communication values such as *shidq* (honest), *tabligh*, *amanah*, and *fathonah*. Communication in this context is no longer just the delivery of information, but rather the main instrument in moral education, integrity development, and spiritual transformation, as explained by Wahbah az-Zuhaili and Al-Maraghi about polite communication as a form of ihsan and a means of social improvement. Therefore, communication techniques in *the Catur Mantap* program can be said to have served as a foundation in shaping the leadership character of students making them not only spiritually religious, but also intellectually intelligent, morally tough, and communicative in social life.

4.2 The communication technique is in accordance with the principles of Islamic communication

The results of the study show that the communication techniques applied by the leadership of the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School in Labuhanbatu are very strategic and in accordance with the principles of Islamic communication. This technique is not only used as a means of delivering administrative information, but also as the main tool in character development and the formation of the leadership spirit of students through the flagship program Catur Mantap (Mantap Ibadahku, Mantap Akhlakku, Mantap Belajarku, and Mantap Bahasaku). In

accordance with the research background, in Islamic education, communication is not just a verbal activity, but a bridge of values in the formation of a moral person. The communication of Islamic boarding school leaders reflects the values of shidq (honest), tabligh (conveying clearly), amanah (trustworthy), and fathonah (wise). This is reflected in the practice of consistent communication between the words and actions of the leader, such as delivering promises that are always kept and conveying reprimands or advice in an honest but still polite and empathetic way. Students not only get information, but also experience the process of moral and spiritual education. As said by one of the senior students, the leader's reprimand is not hurtful, but rather educational, because it is delivered with affection. This shows the implementation of the principles of ihsan and rahmah in the style of communication, as taught by the Prophet (saw).

Communication carried out by leaders also meets the criteria for effective communication according to DeVito (2019), namely openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positivity, and equality. Students are given a dialogue space through forums such as halaqah, daily meetings, and open discussions. This culture of deliberation encourages the involvement of students in the educational process and strengthens the Islamic ukhuwah in the pesantren environment. These findings are in line with the theory of symbolic interactionism by Mead (2019), that a person's self-concept is formed through meaningful social interactions. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the communication techniques used by leaders create meaningful interactions that form the concept of the student's self as a Muslim person with character and is ready to become a leader. Symbolic communication can also be seen from the example of leaders in carrying out worship, morals, and social interaction. This example is part of non-verbal communication that is very strong in the process of internalizing values, in accordance with the meaning of QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 31–33 which emphasizes the importance of language and knowledge as the basis for education and the formation of human identity. In the Mantap Belajarku and Mantap Bahasaku programs, pesantren leaders use adaptive and contextual instructional communication techniques. The Islamic storytelling approach used in conveying the stories of prophets, scholars, and Muslim figures has proven to be effective in conveying moral and leadership values. This technique not only educates cognitively, but also builds the spiritual and social sensitivity of students. This result is strengthened by Zaenuri's (2017) research which confirms the effectiveness of persuasive communication in teaching to shape students' attitudes and understanding. In addition, Putra (2022) also shows that coaching communication techniques have been proven to have an effect on the formation of student discipline and responsibility, which is also reflected in the Catur Mantap program.

This finding is consistent with the results of Nashor's (2014) research which concluded that good teacher communication techniques are able to increase student motivation and achievement. Nasor's research (2013) also underlines the importance of communication as a tool for social change based on a dialogical approach, an approach that is widely applied in Daarul Muhsinin. Even in different contexts, Sari (2021) proves that communication style (coercive or persuasive) greatly determines the acceptance and change of audience behavior. Therefore, the communication techniques of the leaders at the Daarul Muhsinin Modern Islamic Boarding School are not only normative-theologically relevant in Islam, but also scientifically proven to be effective according to modern communication approaches.

4.3 Symbolic Communication: Role Modeling and Character Building

The pesantren leaders serve as living examples, and their behavior is a form of symbolic communication, confirming George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism (2019). According to Mead, identity is shaped through observing significant others. In this context, pesantren leaders model religious commitment and ethical conduct, contributing significantly to students' moral and spiritual internalization. This finding echoes Zaenuri (2017), who emphasized the effectiveness of persuasive and exemplary communication in influencing students' values. However, Sari (2021) presented a different conclusion, showing that coercive communication can also influence behavioral change, especially in public campaigns. While coercive methods may work in broader social contexts, our study reinforces that persuasion and symbolic modeling are more sustainable and consistent with Islamic values in educational settings.

4.4 Instructional Communication and Storytelling

In the *Mantap Belajarku* and *Mantap Bahasaku* components, instructional communication is used through structured advice, storytelling, and real-life examples from Islamic history. This strategy effectively supports moral learning, and reinforces spiritual and cognitive development. It reflects QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 31–33, where language and knowledge are presented as the basis of human identity and education. Compared to the findings of Nasor (2013) who highlighted dialogical communication for driving social change, the pesantren's use of instructional and narrative communication complements this idea but adds a spiritual dimension, unique to religious education.

4.5 Integration with Islamic Communication Principles

Across all techniques, the pesantren leaders consistently demonstrated:

1. Shidq (truthfulness) in feedback and evaluations,
2. Tabligh (clarity) in instruction,

3. Amanah (trustworthiness) through promise-keeping,
4. Fathonah (wisdom) in contextual delivery of messages, and Rahmah and Ihsan (compassion and excellence) in reprimands and encouragement.

These values not only guide content but also shape the tone and delivery style, differentiating Islamic communication from secular models. Although not explicitly mentioned in DeVito's model, rahmah and ihsan enrich the educational interaction in a way that is unique to Islamic pedagogy. The communication techniques applied in the *Catur Mantap* program are both theoretically grounded and empirically effective. They conform with DeVito's communication theory, support symbolic interactionism, and embody Islamic values in practice. While some studies like Sari (2021) suggest alternative strategies (e.g., coercive communication), the pesantren model shows that moral persuasion, symbolic leadership, and empathetic dialogue are more aligned with character formation goals in Islamic education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted at the Daarul Muhsinin Janjimanaan Kawat Modern Islamic Boarding School in Labuhanbatu, it can be concluded that the communication techniques employed by the pesantren leaders are applied in a strategic and structured manner to support the character development of students through the *Catur Mantap* program, which includes *Mantap Ibadahku*, *Mantap Akhlakku*, *Mantap Belajarku*, and *Mantap Bahasaku*. The leadership communication techniques used encompass interpersonal communication (daily dialogue and spiritual guidance), group communication (halaqah and student meetings), symbolic communication (role modeling in worship, discipline, and ethics), and instructional communication (Islamic advice and storytelling). These techniques are not only utilized as methods of delivering information, but more importantly, serve as transformative tools for internalizing Islamic values, nurturing emotional closeness, encouraging student participation, and fostering leadership character. In answering the first research question, the findings show that communication is deliberately used to shape students' character and leadership capacity through continuous interaction, guidance, and moral example. In relation to the second question, the communication techniques applied by the pesantren leaders are highly aligned with Islamic communication principles, namely *shidq* (truthfulness), *tabligh* (clear conveyance), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *fathonah* (wisdom), as well as *ihsan* and *rahmah* (compassion and excellence). These principles are further supported by the theory of effective communication by Joseph DeVito particularly in terms of openness, empathy, and supportiveness and George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, which underlines the formation of identity through meaningful interaction. Therefore, leadership communication at Daarul Muhsinin not only builds a religious and nurturing pesantren climate, but also becomes the main pillar in forming santri who are spiritually grounded, morally upright, and capable of becoming future leaders. These findings imply that leadership communication is a critical factor in the success of character education in pesantren settings, and the communication model found in this study can serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding schools. Further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across pesantren institutions and to develop quantitative instruments to measure the specific impact of communication on student character formation, including exploring the role of digital communication in the modern pesantren context.

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