The Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Communication in Instilling Values of Honesty and Responsibility among Seventh-Grade Students: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT (10pt)

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) is not merely concerned with the transmission of knowledge but with the transformation of values aimed at shaping moral character. Amid the currents of digitalization and social change, madrasahs are increasingly confronted with academic dishonesty and a weakening sense of responsibility, rendering teacher communication a strategic medium for the internalization of values within students' everyday experiences. This study seeks to describe the forms and strategies of PAI teachers' communication in cultivating honesty and responsibility, as well as to explore the meanings attributed by both teachers and students to this process. Employing a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach, the research was conducted at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar. Participants consisted of 2–3 PAI teachers and 5–6 seventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, passive participant observation, and documentation studies, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, supported by source triangulation and member checking. The thematic findings reveal four central axes of value-oriented communication: consistent role modeling, dialogical and contextualized advice, habituation accompanied by rational justification, and feedback that restores and sustains relational bonds. This study positions communicative experience as the primary analytical lens, shifting the focus from a mere inventory of techniques toward a shared meaning-making process through which values are enacted, experienced, and negotiated by teachers and students in the classroom.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) is essentially not merely a medium for transmitting religious knowledge, but also a process of value transformation oriented toward the cultivation of students' noble character. At the junior secondary level, madrasahs bear a strategic mandate to prepare a generation that is characterized by strong moral character, integrity, and a sense of responsibility. This mandate has become increasingly urgent in light of the rapid

currents of globalization, the penetration of digital technology, and socio-cultural transformations which, on the one hand, expand access to information, yet on the other hand pose serious challenges in the form of a weakening of moral values among students (Ghazali, 2023). Phenomena such as the normalization of academic dishonesty, low awareness of trustworthiness (amanah), and the neglect of the personal and social consequences of one's actions indicate that the values of honesty and responsibility must be instilled systematically and sustainably through meaningful education. In this context, teacher communication, as the primary agent of learning, functions both as a medium and a strategic instrument for embedding values into students' daily experiences within the classroom and the broader madrasah environment (Hadi et al., 2025).

Departing from this condition, the present study focuses on two core values—honesty and responsibility—since both constitute interdependent pillars in moral development. Honesty upholds coherence between statements and actions, whereas responsibility entails a readiness to accept the consequences of one's choices. These values are mutually presuppositional: honesty without responsibility risks degenerating into mere candor devoid of commitment, while responsibility without honesty is prone to lapse into superficial compliance. From the perspective of Islamic education, the foundation of these values is not merely normative-theological, but also psychopedagogical. The cultivation of virtue requires repeated actions supported by conscious awareness and exemplary conduct; effective role modeling, in turn, presupposes clarity of moral messages and consistency of behavior. Therefore, it is essential to examine how Islamic Education (PAI) teachers design, implement, and interpret communication in instilling honesty and responsibility, so that best practices can be systematically mapped while existing obstacles are identified (Repi et al., 2024).

At the practical level, MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar was selected as the research site because it offers a rich context for exploring the variety of communication strategies employed by PAI teachers in authentic madrasa settings. Classroom interactions in Grade VII, characterized by the transitional phase from childhood to early adolescence, present both opportunities and challenges for teachers. Moral messages must be not only normatively sound but also psychologically and socially relevant. The ability to connect instructional content with students' lived experiences and moral dilemmas thus becomes crucial: advice on honesty needs to be linked to experiences such as completing online assignments, while the value of responsibility can be mediated through practices of entrusted leadership, for instance by serving as a group leader. Throughout this process, an emotionally safe classroom climate is indispensable, enabling students to openly express doubts and acknowledge failures. Consequently, the effectiveness of teacher communication is measured not merely by rhetorical fluency, but by the capacity to design learning situations that allow students to experience, reflect upon, and ultimately choose virtuous conduct (Asman et al., 2025).

Preliminary observations and document analysis at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar reveal considerable variation in inter-teacher communication practices, encompassing interactional styles, the selection of illustrative examples, feedback patterns, and the consistency of role modeling. Such variation provides an analytical opportunity to map emerging patterns and to formulate cross-class key nodes. For instance, the proportional use of humor functions as an emotional bridge that prevents advice from eliciting defensive reactions; the application of reasoning habituation encourages students not merely to comply, but to understand the rationale underlying rules; and the utilization of everyday incidents such as tardiness, forgetting learning materials, or academic dishonesty as shared reflective moments. Accordingly, teacher communication can be interpreted as a dynamic field of praxis open to improvisation, guided by values, and sustained through continuous reflection.

Methodologically, a qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted, as it aligns with the objective of uncovering the essence of communicative experiences between teachers and students. Rather than pursuing broad generalizations, this study emphasizes an in-depth exploration of meaning within a specific context (Wang et al., 2024). Data were collected through in-depth interviews and passive participant observation to capture communication processes holistically from the upstream design of value-laden messages prior to instruction, their enactment within classroom interactions, to their celebration or reflection afterward. Documentation studies, including lesson plans (RPP), anecdotal records, and madrasah regulations, were employed to ensure that observed practices were grounded in the underlying plans and institutional policies. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model of data reduction, data display, and verification, enabling empirical findings to be elevated to a level of academically accountable discussion (Musadat & Khorimah, 2023).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI), in essence, is not merely a vehicle for transmitting religious knowledge, but a process of value transformation aimed at cultivating students' noble character. At the junior secondary level, madrasahs bear a strategic mandate to prepare a generation that is principled, possesses integrity, and demonstrates responsibility. This mandate has become increasingly urgent amid the rapid currents of globalization, the penetration of digital technology, and shifts in the socio-cultural landscape, which on the one hand expand access to information, yet on the other present challenges manifested in the weakening of moral values among students (Fajri & Mirsal, 2021). The normalization of academic dishonesty, declining commitment to trustworthiness, and a tendency to disregard the consequences of one's actions signal the need for honesty and responsibility to be instilled systematically and sustainably through meaningful learning experiences. Within this context, teacher communication functions both as a medium and as a primary strategy for embedding values in students' daily lives, both within the classroom and across the broader madrasah culture.

This study positions honesty and responsibility as two interrelated core values that jointly underpin moral development. Honesty establishes coherence between words and actions, between

confession and practice; responsibility, meanwhile, entails a readiness to accept the consequences of one's choices. The two values are mutually presuppositional: honesty without responsibility risks devolving into mere frankness devoid of commitment, whereas responsibility without honesty is prone to becoming superficial compliance. From the perspective of Islamic education, these values rest not only on normative–theological foundations but also on psychopedagogical ones. The cultivation of virtue requires repeated actions supported by conscious awareness and exemplary conduct, while effective exemplarity demands clarity of message and consistency of behavior. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how Islamic Education (PAI) teachers design, enact, and interpret communication in instilling honesty and responsibility, so that good practices can be systematically mapped and emerging obstacles can be addressed (Barkatillah & Hamdiah, 2025).

The empirical context of this study focuses on MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar, with particular attention to seventh-grade students, who are in early adolescence—a developmental phase that is both vulnerable and highly formative for character building. At this stage, students are in the process of constructing personal and social identities; they require credible role models and reliable value frameworks to navigate relationships with peers, teachers, and their broader environment. PAI teachers thus emerge as significant figures who not only deliver Islamic subject matter but also guide students in interpreting the meanings of honesty and responsibility in concrete situations, such as completing assignments without plagiarism, safeguarding class responsibilities, keeping promises, and having the courage to acknowledge mistakes (Asman et al., 2024). Communicative practices such as creating safe spaces for dialogue, encouraging reflection on daily experiences, or modeling punctuality shape everyday narratives that frame students' understanding of these values. When communication unfolds as a humane and mutually reinforcing relationship, moral education is more likely to be internalized as lived experience rather than merely memorized knowledge.

Preliminary findings and document analysis within the madrasa environment reveal variations in teachers' communicative practices, including differences in interactional styles, choice of examples, modes of feedback, and consistency of role modeling. This variation provides an opportunity to identify recurring patterns and to formulate key cross-classroom insights. Proportionate use of humor, for instance, can function as an emotional bridge that prevents moral advice from triggering defensiveness; "reasoned habituation" helps students grasp the rationale behind rules so that compliance emerges from awareness rather than coercion; and everyday incidents such as arriving late, forgetting learning materials, or engaging in cheating can be transformed into shared moments of reflection. In this way, the teacher's communicative flow can be read as a dynamic field of praxis open to improvisation, grounded in values, and sustained by continuous reflection (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

Conceptually, effective teacher communication in the cultivation of values should manifest as an integrative experience. The dimension of the message—what is said, how key terms are formulated, the examples selected, and the moral arguments constructed—needs to be coherently

integrated with embodied dimensions and a repertoire of actions: modulation of voice, eye contact, body language, interactional rhythm, and openness to listening. Classroom management structures that enable active participation further strengthen the process of value internalization. When these elements are bound together by sincerity and consistency, the notion of "teaching values" shifts toward "bringing values to life" through everyday interactions grounded in mutual trust.

A deeper understanding of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' communication holds significant potential to contribute to the formulation of a value-oriented educational communication model. Such a model should not be understood as a standardized package of techniques that homogenizes teachers' practices, but rather as a flexible and contextual reference framework. This framework provides direction for clarifying value-oriented goals in every interaction, aligning words with actions, establishing habituation accompanied by rational justification, delivering restorative feedback, and creating reflective spaces that foster students' articulation of moral reasoning. In this way, the madrasah becomes not merely a place where students learn "what honesty and responsibility are," but a community of practice in which these values are acquired through repeated, purposeful, and meaningful experiences (Mansir et al., 2021).

From this perspective, the present introductory section is not intended to add yet another list of pedagogical techniques, but rather to invite readers to closely observe the pulse of PAI teachers' communication in their efforts to cultivate honesty and responsibility among students. This invitation is particularly relevant, as conceptual debates on character education often obscure the determinants of success, which in fact rest upon the quality of relationships, situational sensitivity, and the continuity of practices woven together day by day. If research is able to portray these experiences with clarity and fairness, its findings may serve as a mirror for teachers' self-reflection, a basis for madrasahs to strengthen institutional support, and a means for the educational community to broaden discourse on emancipatory educational communication. Ultimately, the aspiration of Islamic education to form individuals who are honest and responsible will find its realization through communicative actions that are consistent, reflective, and deeply humane.

The literature and preliminary field findings indicate a discernible gap between the normative objectives of character education and the realities of everyday practice. Many interventions remain confined to the level of slogans, codes of conduct, or ceremonial programs, while the processes of everyday communication—which are in fact decisive for the internalization of values—have not been examined in depth from the perspective of the actors involved. In practice, teachers' role modeling is not always accompanied by consistent feedback; well-intentioned advice is not necessarily supported by pedagogical actions that foster moral autonomy; and habituation is not always connected to reflective processes that enable students to understand the underlying rationale of a given value.

At the same time, teachers face tangible constraints, including administrative burdens, limited time, the heterogeneity of students' backgrounds, and a digital culture that often provides instant justification for irresponsible behavior. This complexity underscores the need for an analysis that positions teacher communication not merely as a technical instrument, but as a lived experience that is practiced, interpreted, and continuously negotiated by teachers and students within the concrete context of the madrasah (Zaini, 2024). Previous studies on character education in schools have generally focused on enumerating strategies such as role modeling, habituation, and the provision of rewards and punishments. However, few studies have explicitly employed "teacher communication" as the primary analytical lens for examining value inculcation, particularly through a phenomenological approach that seeks to capture the "meaning of experience" from the perspectives of both teachers and students (Hamdani, 2024). Consequently, much of the existing research remains at the level of surface mapping of strategies, without probing how these strategies are enacted, experienced, interpreted, and negotiated in everyday interactions.

It is precisely this gap that the present study seeks to address. Rather than adding to the list of techniques, the research focuses on the essence of the communicative experiences of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in cultivating honesty and responsibility: what is perceived as effective, what constitutes obstacles, and how these meanings are intersubjectively constructed within classroom interactions and the broader madrasah environment. The selection of a phenomenological approach is intended to trace observable phenomena beyond their surface manifestations toward the deeper structures of meaning in the consciousness of the participants, thereby yielding a rich and contextualized portrayal of value-oriented educational communication (Alfian et al., 2020).

The originality of this study lies in its shift of analytical emphasis from a mere cataloguing of techniques toward a phenomenological reading of teachers' and students' communicative experiences in the process of value internalization. Rather than stopping at the question of "what teachers do," the study centers on "how those experiences are interpreted and given meaning" by the actors directly involved in classroom interactions. This shift is crucial because value inculcation is never neutral; it is always embedded within relational dynamics shaped by perceptions, expectations, and distributions of power. By positioning participants' lived experiences at the core of the analysis, the study seeks to capture nuances that often remain concealed behind formal indicators whether students feel accepted or judged, heard or ignored, invited to think critically or merely required to comply.

When successfully mapped, these nuances provide a conceptual foundation for designing communication strategies that are more sensitive, equitable, and effective. In this framework, values such as honesty and responsibility are no longer "imposed" from outside but emerge from within students as conscious choices, accompanied by a willingness to assume their consequences. From a theoretical perspective, this focus on experiential meaning enriches the literature on value-oriented educational communication by offering thick descriptions of how role modeling, advice, habituation,

and feedback operate intersubjectively within the classroom ecosystem; from a practical standpoint, it opens space for the formulation of contextualized communication guidelines for Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at the MTs level (Ginting, 2024).

In line with this need for deeper understanding, the present study aims to produce a comprehensive portrayal of PAI teachers' communicative practices in fostering honesty and responsibility among seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar. First, the study identifies and describes the forms and strategies of communication employed by teachers, moving beyond the mere labeling of techniques to explicate their operationalization in concrete situations—how conversations about honesty are initiated, how exemplars of responsible behavior are enacted, and how interactions are concluded through feedback that encourages reflection. Second, the study examines the meanings attributed by both teachers and students to these communicative processes, including how teachers interpret students' responses, how students understand teachers' advice, and how particular communicative events are construed as successful, less successful, or problematic. Taken together, these objectives are directed toward the construction of a coherent map of praxis that integrates what is done with how its meaning is jointly constituted.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to uncover the meanings embedded in the lived experiences of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students in communication processes aimed at cultivating the values of honesty and responsibility. The phenomenological focus was deliberately chosen to allow the essence of communicative experiences to be described as they are genuinely lived by the participants, rather than merely quantifying surface-level phenomena. The research was conducted at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar, with primary participants drawn from the seventh-grade level. This approach enables the researcher to trace how value-laden messages are designed, conveyed, interpreted, and validated through everyday interactions within the madrasah environment (Creswell, 2014).

The research subjects consisted of two to three PAI teachers actively teaching seventh-grade classes and five to six seventh-grade students selected to represent a diversity of responses to value cultivation. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their proximity to the phenomenon under investigation and their willingness to share experiences in depth (Sugiyono, 2012). In selecting student participants, variations in student profiles were deliberately considered to avoid homogeneous perspectives for instance, students who tend to be compliant, those still in the process of internalizing values, and those with moderate dispositions as well as recommendations from homeroom teachers or PAI teachers regarding the intensity of students' engagement in value-education activities. This composition is expected to provide a sufficiently rich range of experiences to reconstruct intersubjective meanings within the classroom and the broader madrasah ecosystem.

In addition, the data sources include both primary and secondary data to link participants' lived experiences with the practices and policies that underpin them.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which comprises three principal activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the data reduction stage, interview transcripts, observational field notes, and documents were systematically selected, coded, and organized into relevant thematic categories, including teachers' communication strategies and students' interpretations of value-laden messages (Saldaña, 2022). The results of the coding process were subsequently presented in the form of descriptive narratives, cross-subject comparison matrices, and flowcharts illustrating classroom communicative processes to facilitate analytical clarity and pattern recognition. Based on these displays, the researcher formulated provisional conclusions, which were then repeatedly verified through iterative data review, negative case analysis, and corroboration with alternative data sources. This analytic cycle was conducted continuously from the initial phase of data collection through the final stage to ensure that the findings possessed sufficient analytical depth and explanatory power.Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from teachers, students, direct classroom observations, and official school documents, as well as through member-checking procedures. These procedures involved returning summaries of interview transcripts or preliminary thematic interpretations to key participants to obtain clarification, correction, or confirmation of meaning (Padilla et al., 2022). In this manner, validation was not merely technical in nature but also ethical, as it acknowledged and respected participants' voices as the owners of the lived experiences under investigation.

Data collection was conducted through three complementary procedures. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed to elicit rich descriptions of how teachers planned, implemented, and reflected upon value communication in instructional contexts, as well as how students experienced and interpreted these interactions. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim (Putra, 2025). Second, passive participant observation was carried out by attending Islamic Education (PAI) classroom sessions and relevant non-instructional moments, such as routine school activities, while systematically documenting verbal and nonverbal behaviors, feedback patterns, and the emotional climate accompanying the value communication process (Formisano et al., 2024). Third, document analysis was undertaken on lesson plans, teachers' notes, students' written work or learning products reflecting value internalization, and school regulations, in order to link field findings with pedagogical intentions and the institutional governance framework of the school (Creswell, 2014). Through the integration of these three techniques, the study provides a holistic portrayal of value communication practices across the levels of pedagogical intent, actual interaction, and the institutional structures that support them.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how the communication practices of Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) teachers at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar cultivate honesty and responsibility among seventh-grade students. Field data reveal four interrelated and mutually reinforcing practices. First, PAI teachers demonstrate consistent role modeling between speech and action, ensuring that values do not remain mere discourse but are embodied as habits that students can emulate. Second, teachers employ dialogical advice that avoids reprimand, instead inviting students into sincere, heart-to-heart conversations and providing reasons that are cognitively and emotionally accessible to them. Third, teachers implement structured habituation grounded in clear rationales, such as postponing punishment while entrusting students with specific responsibilities, or requiring students to return borrowed equipment accompanied by written records and reminders. Fourth, restorative feedback is applied when violations occur, for instance by engaging students in discussion, encouraging acknowledgment of wrongdoing, and facilitating the repair of relationships and their impact on peers or the classroom community.

These four practices do not operate in isolation but are supported by a conducive school ecosystem, including a culture of mutual cooperation, visual reminders of shared values, and proportional supervision that promotes order without rendering the classroom environment oppressive. Collectively, these findings align with the overarching narrative of this article: PAI communication that integrates exemplification, dialogue, habituation, and relational restoration as an effective pathway for instilling honesty and responsibility. Within the context of role modeling, PAI teachers function not merely as transmitters of instructional content but as figures who embody values through concrete actions. Consistent exemplification such as punctuality, keeping promises, acknowledging mistakes when misquoting Qur'anic verses, and maintaining trust in small matters like checking and returning books on time operates as a powerful form of "silent communication." When teachers initiate greetings, respond to emotional provocation with patience, and allow students space to articulate their reasons, students receive a clear message that honesty and responsibility are simple, accessible, and practicable virtues. In a madrasa environment that upholds ethical conduct (adab), such consistency undermines student cynicism that moral values are merely rhetorical.

The framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes that value internalization occurs when the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported within the learning process. By providing rationales for rules, inviting students to evaluate consequences, and minimizing controlling or shaming practices, teachers offer autonomy support that deepens students' acceptance of values as personally endorsed rather than as temporary compliance. Recent meta-analytic findings indicate that SDT-based interventions consistently enhance students' perceptions of autonomy and competence support and, to some extent, increase intrinsic motivation (Kell et al., 2024).

In dialogical advisory practices, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers avoid communication patterns that corner students into defensive positions. Instead, teachers invite students to explain the sequence of events, acknowledge the parts in which they were at fault, and reflect on possible ways to make amends. Such an approach habituates students to listening to arguments, weighing evidence, and formulating commitments that they are able to uphold. In several classrooms, teachers initiate light dialogue following minor infractions, for instance by asking, "Why did you choose not to complete the assignment?", and then collaboratively developing a one-week improvement plan. This dialogical exchange itself functions as an exercise in responsibility, as students learn to bind themselves to commitments they have jointly articulated.Additional theoretical perspective 2: Recent scholarship on dialogic pedagogy demonstrates that classrooms which normalize open-ended questioning, justification, and the exploration of multiple perspectives foster participation, shared meaning-making, and higher-order thinking skills. Within this framework, "dialogical advice" should not be understood as softened admonition, but rather as the orchestration of classroom discourse that enables moral values to be internalized through reasoning and intersubjective engagement, rather than through one-directional instruction alone (Laird-Gentle et al., 2023).

When habituation is implemented with clearly articulated rationales, students come to perceive order not as coercion, but as incremental steps toward autonomy. A simple example is the use of a classroom stationery loan list accompanied by a transparent return mechanism and reminders, along with the rotating assignment of a "materials monitor." Students who were initially reluctant to take notes gradually develop the habit, as the process is transparent and they understand why such rules are necessary. Similar forms of habituation can be observed when teachers ask students to lead prayers or summarize the core lesson from the previous week, followed by appreciation directed at effort rather than outcomes alone. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), habituation accompanied by rationales and effort-based appreciation constitutes a form of "value support" and "structure" operating in tandem. Recent systematic reviews indicate that autonomy support and the provision of structure are not opposing poles, but can be optimally integrated to cultivate higher-quality motivation. In other words, clear rules that are perceived as reasonable by students actually strengthen their sense of ownership over the values being learned (Patzak & Zhang, 2025).Another particularly robust element is restorative feedback. Rather than closing cases with disciplinary records, teachers invite students to understand the impact of their behavior, offer apologies, and engage in repair. For example, when a group assignment is neglected because one member dishonestly claimed to have completed their part, the teacher facilitates a brief restorative conversation: the group articulates the impact they experienced, the student acknowledges responsibility, and together they agree on a revised division of labor and a new deadline. What is central to this scheme is not merely the presence or absence of punishment, but the reconfiguration of relationships and shared responsibility. Recent systematic reviews of restorative practices in

schools show that such approaches reduce violence, enhance emotional well-being, and strengthen social-emotional competencies, particularly when implemented gradually and involving the entire school community. Restorative feedback is effective because it shifts the focus from rule violation to repair, positioning honesty and responsibility not as fear-driven compliance, but as means of preserving the dignity of relationships (Alonso-Rodríguez et al., 2025).

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes, moral narratives are frequently employed to illustrate the value of honesty. Teachers recount stories of characters who dare to speak the truth despite its bitterness, or present the adverse consequences of dishonesty for oneself and others. Such narratives are not merely "entertaining"; rather, they provide a reflective mirror through which students engage in an inner moral dialogue. At the secondary level, teachers deliberately select stories that resonate with adolescents' lived experiences, such as cheating on exams, borrowing without permission, or lying to parents. Students are encouraged to exercise moral judgment, rather than simply guessing the "correct answer."Recent experimental research indicates that moral stories emphasizing the positive consequences of honesty are more effective in promoting honest behavior than stories that stress the negative consequences of lying, particularly among children aged seven to ten. These findings are reinforced by other studies showing that narrative themes such as those found in Pinocchio can reduce dishonest behavior among preschool-aged children. The implication is that PAI narratives at the secondary level are more powerful when they foreground the benefits of honesty such as inner peace, peer trust, and stronger interpersonal relationships rather than relying on fear-based approaches that threaten students with divine wrath or social shame (Liang et al., 2025).

The four key practices discussed above become effective because they are implemented consistently and operate in mutual reinforcement. Role modeling provides an emotional foundation, ensuring that teachers' messages do not appear hypocritical. Dialogue creates space for students' voices, allowing values to be understood through reasoning rather than mere compliance. Habit formation accompanied by rational justification offers a structural framework that facilitates the repetition of virtuous behavior, while restorative feedback repairs relationships when violations occur, thereby maintaining a classroom climate that feels safe for learning and personal growth. Underlying these practices is a school culture capable of managing the balance between autonomy and structure. In some classrooms, small ethical codes are collaboratively developed with students for example, "late submission may be acknowledged provided the reason is explained and a remediation plan is proposed," or "borrowing materials is permitted as long as they are recorded in a lending log and returned before the end of the school day." Such ethical codes regulate expectations without undermining students' dignity and gradually cultivate the classroom's reputation as a trustworthy community.

Theoretically, the combination of autonomy support and clear structure aligns with meta-analytic findings demonstrating that both can be integrated to foster healthier forms of motivation. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), teachers enact autonomy support by providing

meaningful rationales, offering opportunities for revision, and inviting students to engage in reflection; meanwhile, structure is manifested through explicit behavioral standards, mutually agreed-upon consequences, and realistic rescheduling of tasks. As a result, the internalization of values such as honesty and responsibility shifts from merely "avoiding punishment" toward genuine self-commitment (Patzak & Zhang, 2025).From the perspective of religious communication, PAI teachers in madrasahs possess a distinctive pedagogical repertoire, including mau'izhah hasanah (benevolent exhortation), role modeling, and mujādalah billatī hiya aḥsan (dialogue conducted in the best manner). However, this study demonstrates that these classical tools are not deployed as "rhetorical weapons," but rather are reformulated in adolescent-friendly language, supported by cause–effect reasoning that students can readily grasp. For example, when addressing honesty, teachers briefly introduce relevant Qur'anic verses and hadith, then connect them to social consequences directly experienced by students—such as the loss of peers' trust or diminished inner peace before inviting them to formulate small, concrete steps toward behavioral improvement. This approach prevents religious teachings from devolving into dogma; instead, they are validated through students' own social experiences.

In situations involving misconduct, restorative approaches help prevent the classroom climate from descending into a spiral of mutual suspicion. Rather than positioning the offender as a publicly shamed "example," teachers engage in brief, focused conversations centered on the impact of the behavior and the needs for restoration. In this way, honesty is framed as a safe "pathway forward." On several occasions, students who had habitually lied about their assignments began to admit that their work was unfinished and to request additional time, accompanied by clear commitments. Here, teachers practice "appreciation of honest disclosure" while simultaneously maintaining academic standards. This principle is consistent with evidence indicating that well-designed restorative practices can reduce aggressive behavior and strengthen students' social-emotional competencies, particularly when implemented as a school-wide community policy rather than as isolated individual initiatives (Alonso-Rodríguez et al., 2025).

819 Moreover, age-appropriate moral narratives play a practical role in middle-grade classrooms. Early adolescents exhibit heightened sensitivity to peer recognition. Accordingly, stories that highlight the social rewards of honesty being trusted by peers, trusted by teachers, and entrusted with greater responsibility tend to resonate more strongly than narratives that rely solely on fear-based deterrence. Recent experimental evidence supports this pattern: emphasizing the positive consequences of honesty is more effective in promoting honest behavior than narratives that stress the negative consequences of lying (Liang et al., 2025). PAI teachers can leverage this finding, for instance, by concluding storytelling sessions not with threats, but with reflective questions such as, "If you are honest with your group today, what do you think will happen to their trust in you next week?" In doing so, students are guided to perceive realistic cause–effect relationships.The strength of this research approach lies precisely in its simplicity. It does not rely on grand programs, but rather

on sustaining a rhythm of consistency. On one day, the teacher models how to offer an apology without forfeiting authority. On another, the teacher allows students to resolve minor conflicts through light mediation. At other times, the teacher commends an honest admission that comes late yet sincerely, while ensuring that academic consequences remain in place. These small events, multiplied over time, become powerful agents of character formation.

Methodologically, the phenomenological approach employed in this study captures the inner atmosphere of everyday moral practice in the classroom, including how teachers choose their words, read students' expressions, and judge when to provide space for dialogue and when to set firm boundaries. This methodological choice is particularly relevant for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as moral values fundamentally emerge from intersubjective experience and lived encounters, rather than from rote memorization alone. The literature on dialogic pedagogy emphasizes that the quality of classroom "talk moves" such as asking questions, inviting students to articulate their reasoning, and referring back to peers' ideas correlates strongly with students' reasoning abilities and with meaningful participation (Laird-Gentle et al., 2023).In practical terms, madrasahs can design small-scale capacity-building packages for PAI teachers that integrate three core focuses. First, enrichment of the "rational language" of values, so that every rule is accompanied by a concise explanation that makes sense within students' lived worlds. Second, training in facilitating dialogue and moral storytelling that culminates in commitments to self-improvement, rather than merely producing "correct answers." Third, the establishment of school-level restorative governance, so that individual classrooms do not operate in isolation. Recent evidence underscores that when Self-Determination Theory (SDT) frames school interventions and restorative practices are institutionalized, learning climates tend to be healthier and prosocial behavior more stable (Laird-Gentle et al., 2023).

Ultimately, the cultivation of honesty and responsibility at MTs Al-Ausath is not a project of indoctrination, but a process of value communication that respects student voice, strengthens autonomy, and nurtures relationships. Honesty becomes possible because the classroom provides a safe space to admit mistakes and make amends. Responsibility becomes attainable because rules are understood, structures are perceived as fair, and opportunities for restitution are available. PAI teachers emerge as role models who invite rather than threaten; as facilitators who guide reasoning rather than merely act as gatekeepers. In this way, moral values grow without drifting from their original purpose; instead, they penetrate to the core: enabling students to be courageous in honesty and capable of bearing the small, everyday trusts entrusted to them.

4. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the communication practices of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers play a strategic role in the internalization of honesty and responsibility values within the madrasah environment. Based on phenomenological findings at MTs Al-Ausath Karanganyar, such communication is not confined to verbal interaction alone; rather, it constitutes a lived value experience jointly embodied by teachers and students in their everyday classroom life. First, consistent role modeling serves as the primary foundation. The alignment between teachers' words and actions conveys tangible moral messages that are readily observable and emulated by students. Second, dialogical and contextual advice enables the values of honesty and responsibility to be understood through rational justification, rather than merely memorized as prescriptive rules. Third, habituation accompanied by meaningful reasoning allows positive behavior to emerge from internal awareness instead of external coercion. Fourth, restorative feedback strengthens teacher–student relationships, fosters a sense of psychological safety, and creates reflective spaces in which mistakes can be addressed without generating stigma.

Taken together, these findings indicate that effective communication by PAI teachers is grounded in a balanced integration of role modeling, structural guidance, and autonomy support. Moral values become genuinely meaningful when teachers do not merely transmit abstract definitions of honesty and responsibility, but present them as shared experiences that cultivate self-awareness and social accountability. The implications suggest that character education grounded in communication should be designed not merely as a formal program, but as a sustained culture of dialogue and exemplary practice. PAI teachers function as facilitators who guide students' moral reasoning, while madrasahs are encouraged to develop ecosystems that support reflective, empathetic, and humane communication as a pathway toward the formation of honest and responsible moral character.

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