

Effectiveness of Communication Strategies on Madrasah Students' Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of communication strategies on Madrasah students' mental health. Previous research has shown that different communication strategies differ in their effectiveness in dealing with the mental well-being of students. This research addresses the different types of modern communication strategies that the Madrasah provides and how they can affect students' well-being. The study was undertaken through three research methods: the close readings of relevant published articles, surveys that were given to pre-university students and graduates of Madrasah institutes, and lastly, an interview with a counselor from Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah. During data collection, we faced several challenges such as finding a suitable time to interview the counselor, waiting for the students to complete the survey, and finding suitable articles related to the issue we are researching. This study deduces that active listening is proven to be the most effective in dealing with students' mental well-being.

Keywords: *communication strategies, Madrasah students, mental health*

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, communication skills between people have undergone significant changes due to technological advancement, which greatly affects their mental states. Researchers have reported that when we can communicate with each other, and ourselves, fully and honestly, we reduce stress and anxiety, and this creates stronger, more satisfying relationships because everyone feels heard. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of communication strategies in mental health promotion, there is still a lack of knowledge on which strategies work best and how to modify them to suit the various requirements of people suffering from mental health issues. Therefore, analytical research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of different communication approaches and interventions.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the effectiveness of different communication strategies on the mental health of Madrasah students. Surveys and interviews are conducted to explore this issue further. The first survey was conducted on Pre-University students of age 17 to 21 years old from different Madrasah institutions via online through the Google Form using the Linkert scale and open-ended questions. As for the interview, we consulted Ms Huda, a Madrasah counselor, on her views of the effectiveness of communication strategies on Madrasah students' mental health. Our research explores how effective communication strategies can address the mental health challenges linked to various stages—identity crises in adolescence

and isolation in young adulthood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication strategies and its impact on the students' mental health

We discovered that, rather than receiving a majority of positive responses, the surveys exhibited an equal stand by the participants. These findings prompt us to conclude that there are varying views towards communication strategies and its effectiveness on mental health. Surveys and interviews have been conducted such that, (1) the most preferred communication strategy is presented by a pie chart (2) the frequency of honest communication with family members and friends is presented by a bar graph, (3) the number of students that are aware of the mental health services and resources available at their respective schools is presented by a pie-chart, (4) the overall well-being of students is presented by a table-scale.

Effective communication strategies are vital for supporting students' mental health. Among them are active listening, non-verbal communication skills, verbal communication skills and empathetic response. Active listening involves the listener to focus and pay attention to the speaker's words and message (Hoppe, 2006). Non-verbal communication skills include body language, eye-contact, facial expressions, gestures and posture (Pease, 2004). Verbal communication skills refer to the ability to relay information and ideas effectively through spoken words (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2013). Empathetic response refers to the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person (McLaren, 2010).

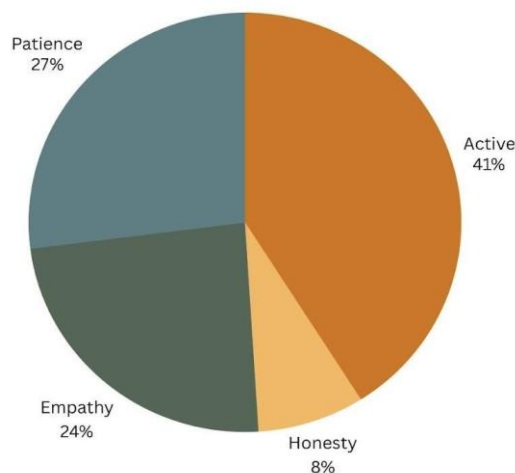


Figure 1. Preferred Communication Strategies Among Students.

The data from Figure 1 reveals that 41% of students favor active communication as their top choice, surpassing other strategies such as honesty, empathy, and patience.

Figure 1 shows that students prefer active listening in a face-to-face manner as a communication strategy. This communication strategy is effective because it helps to avoid conflict and misunderstandings. This not only aids in resolving conflicts but also helps foster a culture of respect. Research published in the *Journal of Adolescence* highlights that active

listening skills contribute significantly to positive peer relationships among youths. Youths who engage in active listening are perceived as more empathetic, trustworthy, and supportive by their peers, fostering stronger friendships and reducing conflicts (Kramer & Uhlig, 2014).

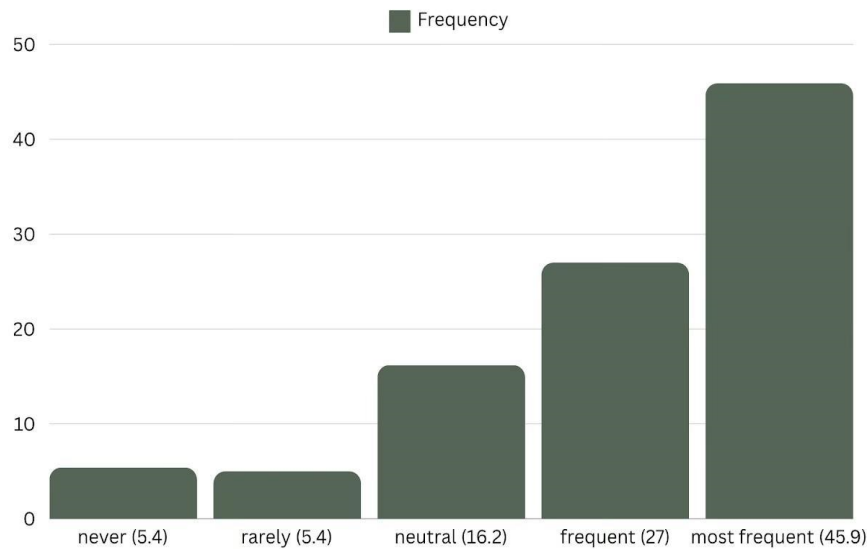


Figure 2. Frequency of Students Sharing Personal Feelings or Mental Health Issues with Family and Friends.

Figure 2 shows that most students share their feelings and mental health issues with their family and friends. It highlights the importance of social support systems for students, with a significant number of them relying on family and friends for emotional and mental health support. According to the Journal of Child and Family Studies, effective verbal communication within families contributes significantly to healthier relationships between parents and youths. Open communication channels help reduce misunderstandings, enhance trust, and promote emotional bonding within the family unit (Kuczynski, 2003).

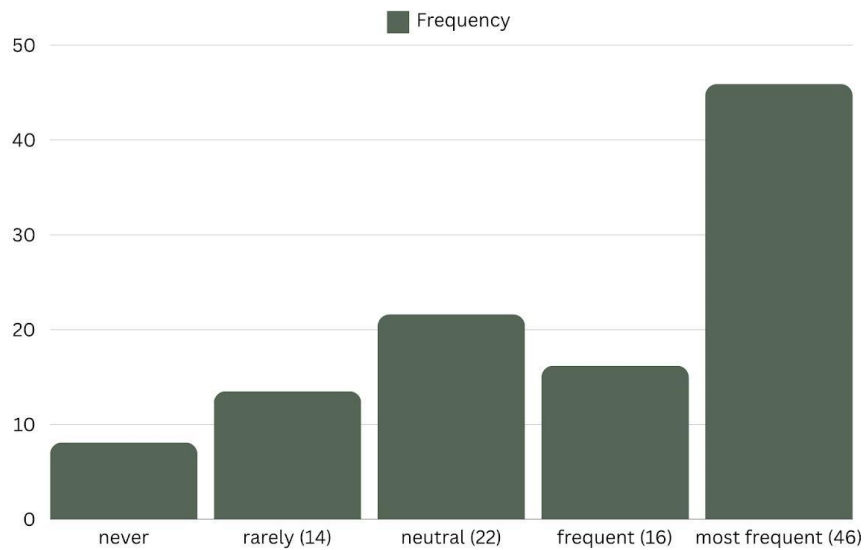


Figure 3. Frequency of Students Sharing Personal Feelings or Mental Health Issues.

The responses shown in Figure 3 in the survey are grouped into five categories: “never,” “rarely,” “neutral,” “frequent,” and “most frequent.” Figure 3 reveals that 62% of students frequently share their personal feelings and mental health issues, indicating a general openness to discussing these topics. However, 24% rarely or never share, often due to stigma or trust issues, particularly within Malay-Muslim culture, as noted by former counselor Ms. Huda: “In the Malay Society, it is like a taboo to talk about your mental health”. Ms. Huda highlights that many in the older generation view mental health issues as non-existent, often attributing them to spiritual influences like 'evil spirits'. Additionally, 22% of students share selectively, suggesting varying willingness based on context. This highlights the need for a supportive environment to encourage all students to discuss their mental health and address barriers to seeking help.

Table 1. Percentage of the level of the student’s well-being

The overall well-being of students									
1 (very poor)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (excellent)
2.7%	5.4%	2.7%	5.4%	16.2%	24.3%	10.8%	18.9%	8.1%	5.4%
(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(6)	(9)	(4)	(7)	(3)	(2)

Table 1 reflects the overall well-being of students on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent), with notable findings: 16.2% of students rated their well-being as poor (1-4), 40.5% rated it as average (5-6), and 43.3% rated it as good to excellent (7-10). The data suggests that while a substantial portion of students feel positively about their well-being, a significant number still experience average to poor well-being. This indicates a need for schools to enhance awareness and accessibility of mental health services, implement targeted interventions for those with lower well-being, strengthen support systems, and maintain programs that contribute to higher well-being ratings to foster a more positive overall student experience.

Erikson's Psychological Stages

Age/Period (approximate)	Principal Challenge	Adequate Resolution	Inadequate Resolution
Adolescence 10-19 years old	Identity vs. role confusion	Comfortable sense of self as a person, both unique and socially accepted.	Sense of self as fragmented, shifting, unclear sense of self.
Early adulthood 18-26 years old	Intimacy vs. isolation	Capacity for closeness and commitment to another	The feeling of loneliness, separation; denial of intimacy needs

Erikson's stages of Identity vs. Role Confusion and Intimacy vs. Isolation are central to understanding adolescent and young adult development. Erikson's framework has been adopted to show how tailored communication could enhance mental health outcomes by fostering identity development and intimate relationships.

CONCLUSION

Based on our findings, most Madrasah students in Singapore share their personal thoughts and feelings with people they are close to and can trust, as seen in Figure 3. However, this does not mean that the students' mental well-being is stable, as seen in Table 1. Therefore, students are still required to try and find support and help if their overall wellbeing becomes affected due to the school workload, which is different from normal secular schools.

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