

Youth santri communication strategies to reduce uncertainty at the beginning of relationships with the opposite sex

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Abstract

Communication between the opposite sex among Islamic boarding school students is a separate field in Islamic communication because they are governed by strict rules. This study aims to examine the communication strategies used by adolescents who are in Islamic boarding schools to reduce uncertainty at the beginning of their relationship. This study is interesting because santri are basically teenagers like teenagers in general. This study uses a quasi-qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The research data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted directly with six informants. The data is then analyzed by Uncertainty Reduction theory. The results of the research show that interpersonal communication is used as a strategy to reduce uncertainty. Interpersonal communication acts as a bridge of information and a means of confirming the correctness of data obtained by informants about the opposite sex, as well as bonding and enhancing closeness in relationships. This research also reveals that the basic reason for young students wanting to have a relationship is because they are curious and need someone to encourage them. This study contributes to the development of a communication strategy based on pesantren morals. The moral of the pesantren itself is one of the bases of the Islamic communication tradition.

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Abstrak

Komunikasi antar lawan jenis dalam kalangan santri pesantren merupakan bidang tersendiri dalam komunikasi Islam karena mereka diatur oleh aturan pesantren yang ketat. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi komunikasi yang digunakan oleh para remaja yang berada di dalam pondok pesantren guna mengurangi ketidakpastian pada awal hubungan mereka. Kajian ini menarik karena santri pada dasarnya adalah para remaja sebagaimana remaja pada umumnya. Studi ini menggunakan metode quasi-kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Data penelitian ini diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam yang dilakukan secara langsung kepada enam informan. Data tersebut kemudian dianalisis dengan teori Pengurangan Ketidakpastian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi antarpribadi digunakan sebagai strategi mengurangi ketidakpastian. Komunikasi antarpribadi berperan sebagai jembatan informasi dan sarana mengkonfirmasi kebenaran data yang diperoleh para informan tentang lawan jenisnya, juga sebagai perekat dan penambah kedekatan dalam hubungan. Studi ini juga mengungkap alasan mendasar santri remaja ingin menjalin hubungan adalah karena rasa ingin tahu dan membutuhkan sosok penyemangat. Kajian ini berkontribusi bagi pengembangan strategi komunikasi yang berbasis pada moral pesantren. Moral pesantren sendiri merupakan salah satu basis tradisi komunikasi Islam.

Kata kunci

Komunikasi interpersonal; strategi; remaja; ketidakpastian.

INTRODUCTION

In order to meet their needs, humans as social beings will interact with each other. From the interaction process, it is not impossible for them to meet the opposite sex. Attraction to the opposite sex can also occur between them, because this is something that is natural. This interest is also felt and experienced by those who are in the adolescent phase.

The Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) defines youth as a group of people who are in the age range of 10 to 24 years and are not married. This group is also divided into several stages such as pre-adolescent, early adolescent and advanced adolescent stages with physical and psychological changes at each stage (Diananda, 2019).

These various changes bring inner turmoil which in the end makes them confused. American psychologist, G Stanley Hall (in Diananda, 2019) states that adolescence is a period filled with upheaval and stressful situations, during which time a teenager will experience various inner conflicts, between everything that is positive or negative. So, it's no wonder that many teenagers try to do things outside the boundaries.

Based on the Indonesian Health Demographic Survey in 2017, 84 percent of teenagers have had dating since they were in their 10th to 17th years. Under these conditions, Mutya Gustina (in Ansori, 2020) stated that this then increases the risk of acting out of line due to high emotional conditions unstable among adolescents, such as romantic treatment that is dependent and acts of control that go beyond boundaries, may even refer to acts of violence and pre-marital sex.

Even though this attraction is a natural thing, not all teenagers dare to express their intentions and goals at the beginning of the acquaintance process with the opposite sex. At the beginning of a relationship between two strangers who have never met before, various predictions and assumptions will appear to reduce uncertainty due to the lack of information needed to establish communication. Uncertainty is not only due to a lack of information, it can also be caused by differences in views and backgrounds, which makes a person doubtful and discourages him from expressing his feelings to the opposite sex (Paramita, 2019).

Therefore, a strategy is needed to reduce this uncertainty. This reduction is needed by individuals because according to Berger and Calabrese (in West & Turner, 2018, p. 142) people will become restless when they are unable to interpret what is happening around them or related to them. Based on the theoretical axioms of Berger and Calabrese, it is explained that this high level of uncertainty not only makes one uneasy, it will also encourage a person to carry out an information search process.

In the context of communication, especially interpersonal communication, the possession of initial information is necessary for the continuation of the relationship. With this information capital, we can determine meaning by interpreting it (Kurniawati, 2018, p. 20). However, other researchers added that the reason someone does this information search is not entirely aimed at reducing uncertainty. Kellerman and Reynolds (West & Turner, 2018, p. 156) based on the results of their research on more than a thousand participants stated that the reason someone is actively involved in seeking information is because they have an interest and are interested in it.

The students who are still teenagers also feel the attraction and uncertainty. For young students who are in Islamic boarding schools, the process of reducing uncertainty in the form of information seeking is a challenge. The existence of rules that prohibit them from having contact with the opposite sex prevents them from finding out things about the people they like.

Although almost all Islamic boarding schools forbid their students from interact with the opposite sex, Islam does not actually prohibit its followers from building relationships and feeling love. Edy Hermawan (2019) in his journal stated that this love

was passed down by Allah S.W.T to two people so that they could live together. Islam never forbids love, but instead Islam urges that love be channeled through the right means. In Islam itself, several means are known, such as *ta'aruf*, *khitbah* or marriage to channel interest in the opposite sex or love.

Widara et al (2021) in their research related to the influence of Islamic boarding school regulations and student discipline stated that these regulations were aimed at creating and realizing a conducive and disciplined environment. Existing regulations are also expected to be able to prevent unwanted things from happening.

Several previous studies tried to find out strategies to reduce this uncertainty. Research conducted by Ishomuddin (2018) on Krapyak Islamic Boarding School students is aimed at finding out how newcomer students reduce uncertainty due to cultural differences that make them feel afraid of not being accepted by old students. The results of the study show that finding facts or truth is necessary to reduce uncertainty, by having a lot of information about Islamic boarding schools, the alleged not accepted can be reduced.

Research conducted by Petroliunanda and Christin (2021) tries to find out the strategies used by new members of the RIOT community in Bandung to reduce uncertainty in the form of fear of not being accepted by old members. The results show that interpersonal communication is used as an interactive strategy to reduce awkwardness by exchanging greetings and other forms such as shaking hands or high-fives.

Nurfita and Fajar (2015) in their research also investigated the strategies implemented by the On-the-Job Training Program participants to reduce uncertainty due to cultural differences between the two countries, namely between Indonesian workers and Japanese workers. The results of their research stated that the participants of the On-the-Job Training Program tried to observe the workings and culture of Japanese workers. They also try to actively find out the work culture of Japanese workers from social media and the internet or by asking colleagues who have previously attended the On-the-Job Training Program. Only then after the On-the-Job Training Program participants have sufficient information, will they begin interacting with Japanese workers directly.

Regarding virtual relationships or cyber-relationships, Haris Muhammad (2021) and Pradnya Aisyah (2019) found that uncertainty is also experienced by those who relate virtually. The uncertainty they experience is in the form of a lack of information about the person they are talking to, so they need to reduce uncertainty before finally establishing a more serious relationship. The results of this study stated that they would intensely observe the virtual life of the opposite sex according to the criteria. They will

try to reduce the uncertainty that arises by searching, observing and obtaining information online. Like by looking at posts or statuses, comments, and interactions that occur on social media. In the next stage they will begin to find out this information through the closest people such as friends, family and so on. Then in the final stage they will use an interactive strategy by starting the process of interpersonal communication.

The five studies show that a strategy is needed to reduce uncertainty. This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese in their theory of Uncertainty Reduction. In this theory, Berger and Calabrese say that this uncertainty arises because at the beginning of a relationship, people do not have enough information to interpret what is happening or what they are feeling. So that without complete information, someone will try to predict and make guesses based only on what he knows (West & Turner, 2018).

The core assumption of this theory is the desire of individuals to reduce the uncertainty they feel in their initial encounters with other people. Individuals will build communication to reduce the uncertainty they feel (Knobloch, 2015). Apart from reducing the uncertainty at the beginning of their meeting, another assumption of this theory states that the uncertainty they experience makes the relationship feel uncomfortable. This theory also assumes that efforts to reduce uncertainty take place in stages and use interpersonal communication as the main tool. The information obtained in this process also changes over time and every behavior in communication can be predicted.

Jennifer L, et al (2011) in her research proved that the main focus and purpose of a person when he first interacts with other people is to ensure that his predictions are correct. Worry about giving an incorrect assumption about someone is a strong motive for someone to communicate. Meanwhile, West & Turner (2018) summarize four strategies that can be used to reduce uncertainty at the start of a meeting. Three strategies were obtained from the results of Berger & Calabrese's theoretical research, while one other strategy was the result of research by Ramirez et al, along with the four: (1) Passive Strategy. This strategy is in the form of a passive search for information, which is carried out with activities in the form of observation without any interaction in the form of communication; (2) Active Strategy. Even though it has not been addressed directly, this strategy is slightly more advanced than the passive strategy, in this strategy the interaction in the form of communication is already taking place. In this strategy, information search efforts are carried out by requesting information from the people closest to them; (3) Interactive Strategy. This strategy involves direct communication, without intermediaries, held to ask and confirm various findings and

information directly; (4) Extractive Strategy. The uncertainty reduction strategy carried out by searching for information is almost the same as the passive strategy, the difference is that the observations in this strategy are carried out via the internet network.

In accordance with what has been described above, this form of communication between the opposite sex who are mutually attracted to each other is not separated by distance. Even though in Haris and Pradnya's research the communication took place virtually, the two of them were still able to communicate properly and smoothly. Unlike the teenage *santri* who are in Islamic boarding schools, they are clearly separated by distance. In addition, there are regulations that prohibit them from interact with the opposite sex. So, that the opportunity to exchange information and reduce the uncertainty becomes less and less.

Under these conditions, the researcher concludes that uncertainty must be experienced by each individual. This is in accordance with the assumptions of the uncertainty reduction theory described above. From the five previous studies that the researcher conveyed, it appears that there has been no research that finds out how teenage students who are in Islamic boarding schools reduce their uncertainty because they like other teenage students. This study intends to find strategies for reducing uncertainty with conditions that do not allow Youth *Santri* to communicate. Apart from being separated by distance, they also have to obey rules that are closely related to values and beliefs. The hope, with this research can be studied and studied the strategies used by teenagers. In addition, what is most important is their motives and reasons for being interested in having a relationship with the opposite sex, and their views on the dynamics they experienced while at the Islamic boarding school.

METHODS

Research related to the communication strategy of youth *santri* phenomenological approach. Creswell (2014) explains that this approach is based on life experience. This approach is specifically intended to focus on the experience experienced by someone so that it can be described descriptively. Moustakas (in Creswell, 2014) describes the description of the experience into two questions related to what the person experienced and how the person experienced it.

Research subjects according to Moleong (2010) are individuals who are used to fulfill information in research related to what will be studied. Based on this understanding, the subjects of this study were youth *santri*'s aged 16-19 years, who had experienced attraction to the opposite sex or had relationships in Islamic boarding

schools. In this study, researchers obtained six informants as research subjects with brief descriptions as follows:

Informant 1: MQ male 19 years old, attended junior high school to high school in one of the Islamic boarding schools in Depok City

Informant 2 : RAA, 19 year old male, attended junior high school to high school in one of the Islamic boarding schools in Depok City

Informant 3: FB, 18-year-old male, attended high school at one of the Islamic boarding schools in West Jakarta

Informant 4: DDA, an 18-year-old girl, studied from junior high school to high school at one of the Islamic boarding schools in Depok City

Informant 5: AI, a 19-year-old girl, attended junior high school to high school in one of the Islamic boarding schools in Depok City

Informant 6: NIA, a 17-year-old girl, attended junior high school to high school in one of the Islamic boarding schools in West Jakarta.

This type of research is quasi-qualitative, meaning that this research seeks to describe the phenomena that occur by incorporating theories or concepts. Quasi-qualitative was chosen because this research cannot be said to be purely qualitative, but rather emphasizes the description of phenomena that occur with existing theories (Bungin, 2007). Data collection was carried out by means of in-depth interviews directly to the six research informants. The results of the interview process were then analyzed in the way stated by Cresswell (2014), namely starting with organizing the data, then re-reading and making important notes, then describing the data, classifying, interpreting and finally presenting it.

The conceptual indicators used to analyze each data obtained from direct interviews with research subjects are adapted to the theories and concepts used. In this study, researchers used the concepts of interpersonal communication, such as the purpose and objectives of interpersonal communication, the concept of interpersonal relationships, the concept of interpersonal perception, as well as other related concepts and also the theory of uncertainty reduction. The data obtained is then classified based on the type of strategy carried out by the research subjects, to then be analyzed in relation to the concepts and previous research and studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teenage *Santri* are teenagers who go to school and gain knowledge, both religious knowledge and general knowledge in the Islamic boarding school

environment. They consciously and obediently follow all the rules that exist in the boarding school environment. However, they are still attracted to the opposite sex. They also feel the turmoil that grows due to interactions that accidentally occur between them. DeVito (2011) mentions at least five factors that cause a person to feel attracted to the other person. These factors are the appearance and attitude of the opposite sex, the closeness that exists, a sense of being valued, compatibility with one another, and finally the existence of complementary attitudes.

All informants in this study stated that such an interest is a natural thing. One of the informants also mentioned that this is part of the growth and development period which is often called puberty. With regard to Islamic boarding school regulations which prohibit them from interact with the opposite sex, the informants in this study differed in their views. Informant 1 assessed that the existing regulations were only orderly, not abolished. So, even though there are regulations and sanctions, the possibility of violations still exists. Informant 1 MQ stated:

“Karena menurut saya gini, adanya peraturan itu, bukannya saya, ini pribadi saya, adanya peraturan ya untuk dilanggar, percuma lho dibuat peraturan kalau ngga ada yang melanggar. Jadi adanya peraturan tetap, cuma ada yang melanggar pun tetap pasti, ngga bisa dipungkiri. Hanya saja ketika ada peraturan itu bisa lebih menertibkan, bukan dalam artian ngga ada yang melanggar gitu. Cuma tetap aja ada yang melanggar”

“Because, in my opinion, there are rules, it's not me, it's me personally, there are rules to be broken, it's useless to make rules if no one breaks them. So, there are rules but of course there are those who break them too, that can't be denied. It's just that when there are rules it can be more orderly, not in the sense that no one violates it. Still there are people breaking” (Informant 1 MQ, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

Informant 2 returns compliance with Islamic boarding school regulations to each student, because this is directly related to the blessings that students will get while studying. Meanwhile, the other four informants admitted that they felt challenged by the regulation. This answer seems to strengthen the community's stigma about Islamic boarding schools as places where naughty children are disposed of, however, according to Azam Syukur and Halim Purnomo (2020) juvenile delinquency of students can be because they are already like that personally, or because they are influenced by the friendship environment.

Azam explained that delinquency needs to be overcome with a heart-to-heart approach based on existing regulations. Therefore, Romadhon et al (2019) state that the presence of regulations is limited to ordering and ensuring that activities and life in the

Islamic boarding school environment are still in accordance with the applicable regulations. Romadhon et al also admit that dating can still occur in the Islamic boarding school environment, this happens because these teenage students are in a period of searching for identity. So, they cannot judge something well.

Following up on the interest they felt, the informants had different views. Some of them admit that they need a special relationship, while others see that this special relationship is unnecessary, because it is not in line with their position as santri, as said by informant 3 FB, "*kalau buat di pondok gimana ya, yang pertama sih kita kan disuruh sama orang tua buat nuntut ilmu, kan engga mungkin itu sama aja boongin orang tua. Yang kedua, perilaku yang tidak mencerminkan lah santri (what about making it at the cottage, first of all we were told by our parents to seek knowledge, right? It's impossible to lie to our parents. Second, behavior that does not reflect Islamic students)*" (Informant 3 FB, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

The existence of rules and different views regarding relationships is a form of uncertainty that they experience. In addition, the informants also mentioned that there were other things that caused this uncertainty, such as doubts due to the lack of complete information about the opposite sex they liked. Information such as character and personality, relationship status, daily attitudes and so on is difficult for them to obtain because they are separated by distance and regulations. This information is used as material for the formation of perceptions. Kurniawati (2018) states that perception is a series of processes of interpreting the various phenomena that occur by selecting and arranging them. So, what happens when the required information is incomplete, the process of interpreting the phenomenon does not go well.

The past and social status of the opposite sex were also other obstacles experienced by the informants. Then there needs to be a communication strategy to reduce this uncertainty. The results of this study found several strategies carried out by youth santri, these strategies were in accordance with those proposed by Berger & Calabrese in their theory and one strategy added by Ramirez et al in his research (West & Turner, 2018).

Passive strategy

The passive strategy was the first strategy carried out by the informants. Although only two of the six informants actually implemented this strategy, the other four informants also indirectly implemented this strategy. This passive strategy is a strategy that is carried out without direct interaction and is only in the form of observation from a distance.

Informants 1 and 3 in this study admitted that they were first interested and implemented strategies to reduce uncertainty by observing from a distance without direct interaction. Informant 1 heard stories about the opposite sex from his roommates, while informant 3 saw the opposite sex from a distance while reciting the Quran together. Informant 1 MQ said, *"kalau di jalur pondok beda mungkin. Dengar cerita, katanya ini cakep lho, oh siapa sih dia yang diceritain selama ini? Oh, dia orangnya. Jadi kita timbul rasa ketertarikan (inside the hut, maybe it's different. Hearing the story, it is said 'she/he is cute, you know, who is he/she being told all this time? Oh, he's the one. So, we got interested)"* (Informant 1 MQ, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

What was conveyed by Informant 1 is something that must be experienced by the santri, because in their spare time when they are joking with their roommates, conversations about the opposite sex will definitely be sparked. They will share stories about the opposite sex they like, about the opposite sex they met by accident, or the opposite sex they are currently close to. It's conversations like this that make curiosity grow and then narrows down to one name which later during the holidays they will find out more about their identity.

Even though they have the opportunity to meet and communicate face to face, most of them choose not to interact with the opposite sex in the Islamic boarding school environment. So that, like what was experienced by Informant 3 when the male and female santri were studying together, he only dared to glance at them and save his feelings until the holidays arrived. He said:

"Kalau saya itu tipekal orang yang suka pandangan pertama lah gitu, kalau lihat orang tuh kayak wah ini cakep. Gak kayak orang lah ribet harus kayak gimana. Awal-awal sih masih dipendem, cuma kayak gimana ya, kayak rasa diri berontak gitu lah. Kayak rasa-rasa penasaran lah

"I'm the type of person who likes it at first sight, if you see people like this, for example, 'he/she is cute.' It's not like people are complicated what to do. In the beginning, I was still held back, it's just how I feel, I feel like I'm rebelling like that. It's like curiosity)" (Informant 3 FB, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

Other informants who had the opportunity to interact directly with the opposite sex both directly and through online messages also tried to apply this strategy. For example, by seeing and reading the movements and attitudes of the opposite sex. Informant 2 admitted that he tried to give inducement at the beginning of his interaction with the opposite sex he liked to find out the response or attitude in return. If indeed there is no good response, he will sincerely and not force his will to leave the opposite sex. According to informant 2 RAA, *"kalau saya pribadi mah ya, kalau saya udah*

mancing-mancing ternyata gitu, ya udah tinggalin aja. Saya orangnya ngga maksa, maksudnya kalau ngga bisa ya udah ngga apa-apa (personally, if I've been fishing (giving a code) and don't get a response, I'll just leave it. I don't like to force someone, meaning if you can't (respond) then it's okay." (Informant 2 RAA, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

The passive strategy as the first strategy carried out by these youth santri plays quite an important role at the beginning of the process of establishing a relationship. Even though it was not carried out by direct interaction because there were regulations that prohibited them from having direct contact, the information obtained from this initial strategy was quite useful in determining what steps to take next. Information, whether in the form of a roommate's story or comments about the opposite sex, or a glimpse of an accidental glance, can give early impressions to young students.

Active strategy

The second strategy carried out by young *santri* after they have received some initial information about the opposite sex is to ask their closest friends or family of the opposite sex they like. The initial information they got in the previous process could be inaccurate and only in the form of conjecture, so by asking people who know the opposite sex better, the uncertainty can be reduced. Informant 1 MQ stated:

"Pertama media ke temen-temen karena posisi lagi di pondok. Kedua lewat perantara temen ketika liburan, terutama temen-temen dekat. Ada yang perlu dipastiin, Dia tuh kayak gimana sih orangnya? Emang bener kayak gini? Kan gitu, otomatis kan kita denger-denger cerita dia kan macam-macam, ada ke sisi kebajikannya ada sisi keburukannya, nah disitu kita pastiin dulu ketika kita tanya ke temen-temen dekatnya, ini bener ngga orangnya kayak gini lho?"

"First making my friends an intermediary because of their position at the cottage. Second, through intermediaries, friends during holidays, especially close friends. There is something to be sure, what kind of person is he? Is it really like this? Isn't that right, we automatically listen to all kinds of stories about him, there are good sides and bad sides, so we'll make sure there first when we ask close friends, are these people really like this?" (Informant 1 MQ, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

Asking close friends or even family is the right choice. In the stages of relationship development presented by DeVito (2011), closest friends or family have entered the intimacy stage so that they have far more information than young students

who are just trying to get to know and establish relationships with the opposite sex. Informant 5 AI said:

*"Nanya ke temen-temennya, ya siapa aja, ke temen dia yang cowo juga. Terus sama yang cewe nya juga, jadi temen deketnya. Tapi lebih kayak kita ke, misal A*** nyuruh D***, tanyain dah maksudnya dia gimana gitu kalau di pondok? Terus maksudnya kayak dia emang gimana sih. Sering baperin cewe lain ngga sih? Apa cuma gw yang kebabaperan?"*
*"Asking his friends, whoever, his male and female friends, his close friends. But it's more like for example, A*** tells D***, 'ask what does he mean when he's in the hut?' So, what does he mean? Does he often disappoint other girls? Am I the only one who's nervous?" (Informant 5 AI, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).*

Teenage *santri* will try to ascertain and dig up information about the opposite sex by asking roommates who already know them or other friends they consider close to the opposite sex. This active strategy is an effort to ensure initial estimates and information that has been obtained in the previous strategy.

Extractive strategy

An additional strategy beyond the three strategies presented by Berger and Calabrese was put forward by Ramirez et al (in West & Turner, 2018), according to which there are efforts to reduce uncertainty by using the internet. Efforts such as searching for information, confirmation with closest friends and family or even direct interaction with the opposite sex can be done virtually.

In this study, almost all informants who were youth *santri* used the internet as a means of interacting with the opposite sex. Informant 2 took advantage of the moment when the opposite sex was active on social media to contact him. Other informants also tried to find information about the opposite sex on social media. Informant 2 RAA said:

"Engga, jadi mungkin karena sama-sama lagi online kan, sama-sama lagi aktif gitu di ig dm-an. Kenal cuma sebatas kayak kenal nama, terus kenal kayak masa lalunya sama si ini lah itu. Iya, cuma kita ngga ngeliat mukanya gimana, pokoknya oh si ini gitu doang."
"No, so maybe because we're both online, we're both active on IG. We know each other only as if we know each other's names, then we know each other's past relationships with someone. Yes, it's just that we don't see what his face looks like, anyway oh this one is just like that." (Informant 2 RAA, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

The information that has been obtained is then used as material for discussion. The ability to develop an atmosphere so that it is not awkward and becomes more comfortable is very necessary, especially for young boys because most of them think that it is the man who should initiate the interaction. Because teenage students are in Islamic boarding schools, this strategy can only be done when they are on vacation, that is, when they are able to use their cell phones again after previously not being allowed to use cell phones for one semester.

This extractive strategy is quite influential for the continuity of the relationship, if the interaction that occurs cannot convince the opposite sex, then there will be no face-to-face meeting between the two. The teenage *santri* in this study admitted that it took a lot of effort to melt the hearts of the opposite sex so that they would be invited to meet in person. Even though it took place online, these *santri* could not publish their relationship on the internet. Some of them are even very careful and try to remove evidence of interaction.

Interactive strategy

This strategy is the final step taken by young *santri* in their efforts to follow up on their attraction to the opposite sex. In this strategy, interaction has been carried out directly, both virtually and in face-to-face meetings. After the information obtained from the previous strategies was sufficient, the informants, especially male informants, would try to start interacting with the opposite sex. At the beginning of the interaction, the three male informants admitted that they did not directly express their feelings, according to them, they needed to build a sense of comfort first. Informant 1 MQ said:

"Ketika kita ngajak ketemuan atau kita ngobrol secara langsung kan otomatis kita harus mempunyai keakraban dulu, lewat chat. Baru kita masuk jalur emosional, antara pribadi-pribadi, kepribadian dia gimana, kita sudah dekat nah disitu tumbuh. Apalagi sampai kita bisa bertemu bareng, nah itu kan ada chemistry yang didapat pasti, ketika kita bertemu dengan lawan jenis kita, dibandingkan lewat media sosial"

"When we ask to meet or we chat in person, we automatically have to have intimacy first via chat. Then we enter the emotional path, between individuals, what is his personality. When we are close, feelings grow. Especially when we can meet together in person, so there's chemistry that we get when we meet our opposite sex, compared to via social media"
(Informant 1 MQ, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

In contrast to male informants, female informants admitted that they were reluctant to initiate interactions, they chose to wait for the opposite sex they liked to realize and initiate interactions. Some of the three female informants admitted that they tried to send codes so that the opposite sex knew that they were interested. Informant 6 NIA stated, *“engga pernah ngebahas soal rasa, cuma kadang tuh suka ngodein. Tapi emang orangnya yang ngga peka kali ya. Jadi ya engga ada apa-apa”* (I never talk about love; I just like to code sometimes. But he's a very insensitive person. So yeah, nothing." (Informant 6 NIA, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

To reduce uncertainty as a result of existing regulations, the informants tried not to have direct contact with the opposite sex at Islamic boarding schools. Some of them said they had to know and be aware of their position while studying at Islamic boarding schools. But still there are those who try to get in touch even if only through a letter or a greeting from afar. In this case the informant admits that he has to be clever and playful so he doesn't get caught. Another informant who could meet the opposite sex on vacation tried not to publish photos and looked for a place to meet that was far from the Islamic boarding school. Informant 4 DDA said, *“iya kucing-kucingannya, paling udah cuma senyum-senyum, gimana sih bang namanya ketemu dari jauh gitu. Kasih semangat ya itu dari surat biasanya kalau kayak gitu, dioper-oper nanti tiba-tiba dateng tuh surat* (yes, like the cats and mouse, at least they just smile. Imagine, we just met from afar. We give each other encouragement, yes that's through a letter. Usually the letter is passed around, then suddenly a letter arrives to the recipient.” (Informant 4 DDA, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

So, it can be concluded that the interactive strategy is a determinant of the continuation of the relationship. Good demeanor when interacting directly with the opposite sex can give a special and deep impression. By interacting directly, teenagers also get more certain information, so that the various assumptions they previously imagined get certain clarity.

The reasons for teenage *santri* being attracted to the opposite sex varied, most of them admitted that this interest first arose from the closeness that was established as a result of exchanging online messages during the holidays. There are also those who are interested because the appearance of the opposite sex is judged according to their criteria. Compatibility when interacting with the opposite sex when going to play together with other fellow students is also another thing that makes them interested. The presence of a member of the opposite sex in the midst of a problem they are experiencing also makes them feel valued and protected, so that feelings of liking slowly grow. Informant 4 DDA stated, *“iya sama, kebanyakan gitu sama. Kalau engga namanya bocah-bocah baru keluar pondok penasaran pengen kenal cowok dalam pondok gitu*

kadang ada yang ngechat tiba-tiba. Jadi dari chatan jadi resep, padahal gak tahu nih mukanya yang mana (It's the same, mostly like that. If not, then how? The kids who just left the cottage are usually curious to get to know guys. Sometimes someone chats suddenly. So, we chat with each other, even though we don't know which face each other is." (Informant 4 DDA, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).

What was conveyed by the six informants in this study was in accordance with what had been conveyed by DeVito regarding the factors that cause a person to be attracted to the opposite sex. Meanwhile, the purpose of young students interacting with the opposite sex is in accordance with one's goal of communicating as stated by Suri (in Hanani, 2017), namely to learn, build relationships, influence each other, play and seek pleasure, and help others.

The results of this study found that the reason young santri wanted to have a relationship with the opposite sex was because they needed someone to encourage them. Another teenage santri revealed that the reason for having a relationship was because he was curious and wanted to know what it was like to have a relationship with the opposite sex. In addition, their roommates' encouragement and stories about how happy and enjoyable it is to have a relationship with the opposite sex also affect them. According to informant 5 AI, *"iya namanya bocah pondok punya penyemangat itu doang, jadi dibilang cinta mah engga. Kayak yang penting nyaman gitu bang. Waktu mau ujian ngasih surat semangat. Iya itu dari surat biasanya kalau kayak gitu (yes, it's understandable, hut boys just want to have that encouragement, so I can't say it's love. Like the important thing is comfortable. For example, when they are about to take a test, they give each other encouragement letters. Yes, it's usually done through a letter." (Informant 5 AI, interview, Jakarta, July 2022).*

Out of the six informants, only five attempted to have a relationship with the opposite sex. One informant chose to keep his interest in it. Then of the five informants who had tried to have a relationship, only four of them finally succeeded in having a relationship with the opposite sex. So that the relationship between the four informants with the opposite sex became even closer, one informant's relationship with the opposite sex was normal and one informant's relationship with the opposite sex became tenuous because they failed to establish a relationship.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that even though these teenage santri cannot communicate directly while in the Islamic boarding school environment, some of them still try to establish communication during holidays through social media. They do this

to answer their curiosity and meet the need to interact with the opposite sex. Of the six informants, only two were really interested in or liked the opposite sex because of the information they got at the Islamic boarding school. The other four people became interested and liked communicating online while on vacation at home. Nevertheless, the six informants still appreciated the values instilled by Islamic boarding schools not to overdo it when having relationships with the opposite sex. They also make a commitment with their partners to avoid communicating as much as possible while in the Islamic Boarding School environment.

The strategy presented by Berger & Calabrese in their theory is adapted for use by youth *santri*. Not having many opportunities for interaction, they maximize every strategy they can come up with. As a result, they can still get the information they need and reduce uncertainty. Even though the frequency of interaction between them is very small, the commitment and values that they uphold are the key to the successful relationship of the young *santri*. Interpersonal Communication in this case plays a role in every existing strategy as a bridge of information, as well as glue and enhancer of closeness in relationships. Factors that make you attracted to the opposite sex are closeness, physical appearance, and a sense of being appreciated. Meanwhile, their reason for wanting to be in a relationship is because they need a figure of encouragement, curiosity, and encouragement from friends.

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