



## I Am Not Alone!: Peer Support as a Pathway to Strengthen Communication among Introverted Students

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### A B S T R A C T

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This study investigates how peer relationships contribute to the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, 10 introverted students were selected through personality screening and interviews. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and participant observations, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model to capture patterns and meanings from their lived experiences. The findings reveal three central themes. First, introverted students tend to demonstrate reflective, thoughtful communication styles, yet they encounter difficulties with nonverbal cues, such as eye contact and body language, which often hinder effective interaction. Second, peer relationships serve as a crucial source of emotional support, providing safe spaces that reduce anxiety and encourage more open dialogue, thereby facilitating gradual improvement in communication competence. Third, both internal factors, including self-confidence and

communication anxiety, and external factors, such as the campus environment and opportunities for collaboration, significantly shape their development of interpersonal communication. Overall, the study concludes that peer support plays a vital role in enhancing the confidence, active participation, and communicative competence of introvert students. These insights highlight the need for peer-based strategies and inclusive educational practices in Islamic higher education to better support introvert learners and foster more effective interpersonal engagement.

## **Introduction**

The ability to communicate effectively is a fundamental key to building healthy relationships, fostering collaboration, and achieving both individual and collective goals (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). Interpersonal communication facilitates the exchange of information, mutual understanding, and problem-solving across various settings, ranging from personal relationships and educational contexts to professional environments (Abed et al., 2023). In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, these skills have become even more critical, as cross-cultural communication, team collaboration, and the capacity to articulate ideas clearly are essential for success in both academic and professional spheres (Hargie, 2021).

In academic settings, particularly in higher education, interpersonal communication plays a central role in supporting the teaching and learning process (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Students with strong interpersonal communication skills are generally more active in classroom discussions, more confident in expressing their opinions, and more successful in group activities (Qureshi et al., 2023) developing classrooms for active learning is becoming a part of comprehensive educational drive for students involving and engaging in learning. For this purpose, influence of social factors on collaborative learning and engagement has been investigated which will influence learning performance of students. The study looked at following areas: (a. These skills are not only

vital for enhancing academic performance but also for building meaningful relationships with peers, lecturers, and the wider campus community. A healthy social network provides significant emotional and academic support (Dauber & Spencer-Oatey, 2023).

However, not all students possess the same level of interpersonal communication skills. Students with introverted personalities, for example, tend to face greater communication challenges than their extroverted peers (Tao et al., 2020). Introverted students are often more reserved, prefer working independently, and commonly experience anxiety in social situations that require intensive interaction (Mustoip et al., 2024). They also tend to avoid public speaking opportunities, which can limit their participation in class discussions and student organizations (Adrianto & Ariesta, 2021). Furthermore, J. Li et al. (2025) they found that introverts reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, and fear due to COVID-19. Such conditions may hinder their academic achievement and the development of essential social competencies (Raley, 2023).

Several prior studies have explored the influence of friendships on the interpersonal communication of introverted individuals. Battle & White (2024) Found that introverted females frequently experience social isolation and emotional disconnection, contrary to the common assumption that females always maintain strong social support from friends. The rising levels of loneliness among both male and female students can negatively affect mental health and social cohesion. Similarly, Manchanda et al. (2023) through a qualitative literature review, researchers concluded that friendships play a vital role in supporting adolescent mental health. Peer-based approaches offer emotional support and enhance psychological well-being. Echoing this, Desi et al. (2022) found that peer relationships help introverted students express themselves, serve as models of effective communication, and ease their adaptation to both social and academic environments.

To date, there has been limited research specifically investigating the intersection of peer support and the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in the context of Islamic higher education. Most existing studies have emphasized quantitative approaches, which often fall short in capturing the holistic relational dynamics and the internalization

processes of communication skills within the complex social environments of university students. Addressing this research gap, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to explore in depth patterns of peer interaction and their contribution to enhancing introverted students' interpersonal communication abilities. The study seeks direct insights from participants in similar academic contexts to develop a comprehensive understanding of how social interactions support the development of character, academic achievement, and da'wah capacities among students.

## **Research Methods**

This study applied a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of introverted students and how these shape their interpersonal communication within the academic context (Creswell, 2007)(Moustakas, 1994). Conducted at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, the research involved ten undergraduate students from the 2021 cohort of the Islamic Education Program, identified as introverts through the Big Five Personality Scale and follow-up interviews. With informed consent, data were collected using in-depth interviews and participant observations to capture both subjective perspectives and real-life interactions (Roulston & Choi, 2018)(Wästerfors, 2018). Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling based on the research objectives. Participants were chosen because they possessed experience and understanding relevant to the phenomenon under study. The inclusion criteria for this study were as follows: (1) participants were first-year undergraduates from the 2021 cohort of the Islamic Education Program, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, and (2) they were willing to participate actively in the data collection process. These criteria were selected to ensure that the data obtained were in-depth and aligned with the study's focus. Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes, was audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. At the same time, observations within the campus environment provided insights into peer interactions and the participation of introverted students in academic and social activities.

**Table 1. Number of research participants and Distribution.**

Participant Code	Gender	Introversion Background Factors	Dominant Introverted Characteristics	Personality Verification (Big Five + Interview)
P1	Male	Strict and authoritarian parenting style	Quiet, tends to avoid class discussions	High introversion score; passive in class
P2	Female	Lack of social support from environment	More comfortable studying alone, reluctant to perform	Withdrawn tendency; low self-confidence
P3	Male	Past school experience with bullying	Difficulty socializing, withdraws from groups	Strong introversion; negative social experiences
P4	Female	Competitive social environment	Shy, low confidence in interactions	Minimal social participation; avoids public exposure
P5	Male	Academic pressure and high expectations	Focused on academics, limited communication	Prefers solitude; reluctant to join organizations
P6	Female	Minimal family communication	Avoids group activities, passive	Difficulty interacting in groups
P7	Male	Individualistic peer environment	Struggles to build relationships, prefers solitude	Quiet tendency; limited social relationships
P8	Female	Lack of organizational experience	More comfortable with online communication	More expressive online; rigid in face-to-face settings
P9	Male	Anxiety in social situations	Hesitant to speak in front of peers	High introversion score; social anxiety
P10	Female	Overprotective family	Needs encouragement to interact	Dominant introversion; low communication initiative

The data collection was conducted between August and September 2024 using a descriptive qualitative approach. Methods included semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and the Big Five Personality Scale to identify introverted tendencies among participants. Ten undergraduate students from the 2021 cohort of the Islamic Education Study Program, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, participated with informed consent. Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes, was audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim, while classroom, library, and public space observations provided contextual insights into peer interactions. Ethical principles, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw, were strictly observed.

To ensure credibility, methodological triangulation was applied by combining interviews and observations (Campbell et al., 2020). Data saturation was reached after interviewing ten participants, and member checking was conducted by sharing transcripts for verification. Three researchers independently analyzed the data before reaching consensus on coding and themes. The analysis applied thematic analysis using the Miles & Huberman (1984) framework, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These strategies strengthened the validity, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

**Table 2.** Illustration of Code Development and Theme Classification

Interview Quote	Initial Code	Thematic Category	Main Theme
“I feel more comfortable when friends do not judge me while I speak.”	Need for acceptance and sense of safety	Supportive environment	Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment
			for Interpersonal Communication Development
“Close friends usually understand my feelings even though I rarely speak.”	Emotional understanding from friends	Mutual empathy	Emotional Support and Reciprocal Understanding
			in Interpersonal Communication Development

<p>“When invited to join organizational activities, I was initially hesitant but eventually became comfortable speaking.”</p>	<p>Peer encouragement in activities</p>	<p>Social participation</p>	<p>Promoting Engagement in Social Activities to Enhance Communication Skills</p>
<p>“I often find it easier to express my intentions through facial expressions or gestures.”</p>	<p>Reliance on non-verbal cues</p>	<p>Non-verbal communication skills</p>	<p>Enhancing Non-Verbal Communication Skills through Peer Interaction</p>

## Results

This study critically examines the influence of peer interaction on the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in the Islamic Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to explore the subjective experiences of introverted students in interacting with their peers and how these experiences shape their communication abilities. In-depth interviews and observations revealed that introverted students tend to feel more comfortable interacting in small groups or with supportive peers than in larger forums or with unfamiliar individuals. This pattern was reinforced by both interview data and observation notes, which consistently indicated higher levels of participation among introverted students when supported by peers who understand their needs.

Furthermore, although not all students experience communication difficulties, the majority reported feeling awkward and reluctant to engage in discussions or social activities without encouragement and support from their peers. These findings underscore the importance of a safe and supportive social environment for introverted students, enabling them to gradually and effectively develop their communication skills.

The recognition of diverse challenges in interpersonal communication among introverted students further underscores the importance of peer support. The findings of this study are structured into four key thematic sections, the four key themes presented in this section were derived from the open coding and thematic categorization process described in the Method section, ensuring a direct link between data analysis and the findings reported here: (1) Creating a

protected and strengthened ecosystem for Interpersonal Communication among Introverted Students; (2) Emotional Support and Mutual Understanding; (3) Encouraging Engagement in Social Activities; and (4) Enhancing Non-Verbal Communication Skills through Peer Interaction.

A critical aspect of these findings is how introverted students internalize social experiences through peer interactions to develop their interpersonal communication skills. The results indicate that the more consistent the support and peer interaction, the more effectively introverted students can express their opinions and build social relationships. Rather than treating individual factors, the social environment, and peer support as separate elements, this study emphasizes their interconnectedness as integral to the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in the Islamic Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Creating a protected and strengthened ecosystem for Interpersonal Communication among Introverted Students, this might be added as a sub-chapter, which is according to the needs of the writing. This section can consist of several sub-sections, typed in bold style, as in the following example: Even though you will add sub-sections to this sub-section, it is recommended not to add them. One sub-section is enough; then, it can be narrated according to the content written.

Sub-section and illustration narration. You can attach pictures, documentation files, tables, and other illustrations to this section. If it is a high-resolution image that hinders sending e-mails or using the Open Journal Systems (OJS) submission page during registration, we recommend listing it separately or creating your own attachments. Peer relationships are crucial in establishing a safe and supportive social environment for introverted students (Nyborg et al., 2022). Introverted students tend to feel more at ease in calm social settings, making it difficult for them to adapt to high-pressure communication contexts or situations involving many individuals (Lawn et al., 2019). The presence of peers who understand their needs creates a space free from the fear of social judgment and the pressure of expectations, thereby providing introverted students with an opportunity to develop their communication skills naturally and gradually (Resnik et al., 2023)

A safe social environment enables introverted students to participate without the fear of unconstructive criticism or interruptions. In intimate and supportive settings, they can speak more confidently, understand interpersonal dynamics,

and gradually improve their ability to express their opinions, even if their delivery remains somewhat rigid (Camilleri & Bezzina, 2022). This approach allows introverted students to build authentic social connections without sacrificing their personal comfort. Observations show that introverted students are more actively engaged in small, supportive group discussions. In these settings, they feel freer to speak, share ideas, and connect with other group members (H. H. Li et al., 2020) previous studies have mainly linked it to students' writing and focused more on students' written texts than their talk. Consequently, the analyses have largely been text-oriented rather than talk-oriented and have failed to reveal a complete picture of such talk and the socially negotiated nature of the interaction. To fill up the literature gap, we designed a study to investigate the nature of prewriting small-group student talk in Chinese tertiary EFL writing classrooms. Specifically, we examined what students were talking about when engaging in argumentative writing tasks prior to individual writing. Eight hours of audio recordings of student talk from eight small groups in two classes (N = 48). In contrast, in larger or less supportive forums, they tend to avoid direct interaction. As P4, P7, and P9 mentioned in an interview.

*“A safe and supportive environment for introverted students is one where they do not feel judged or pressured to speak. A relaxed atmosphere, like discussions in small groups or communities with shared interests, makes them feel more comfortable participating. Additionally, support from patient peers who value their opinions greatly helps in building their confidence.”*

This underscores the importance of creating a socially safe environment that encourages introverted students to hone their interpersonal communication skills. Such an environment not only encourages introverted students to participate but also boosts their self-confidence as they face future communication challenges. Peer support helps alleviate the psychological barriers often experienced by introverted students, such as fear of failure or anxiety about criticism. Therefore, this environment catalyzes their continued interpersonal growth. As Huerta et al. (2024) suggested, students' lack of confidence gradually diminishes as group dynamics evolve, eventually creating a psychologically safer atmosphere in which all group members feel freer to share ideas and collaborate. Peer interaction

that fosters a safe, supportive social environment is thus a key element in the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students. According to Slavich et al. (2023), peer interactions can have significant emotional and social impacts. By providing a pressure-free and judgment-free space, peers help introverted students overcome communication barriers, strengthen their self-confidence, and build meaningful connections. Hence, educational institutions must foster an inclusive social culture in which all students, including introverts, can thrive academically and socially.

### **Emotional Support and Mutual Understanding**

The role of peers in providing emotional support to introverted students is crucial in enhancing their confidence in communication (Bakhtiar & Suwandi, 2022)(Nadiv & Ricon, 2022). Introverted students often face challenges in social or academic situations that involve large groups, where they tend to feel anxious or uncomfortable. According to Ye et al. (2021), emotional and social support (e.g., from parents, peers, and lecturers) has a significant direct relationship with reducing academic burnout. Peers who offer emotional support, whether through encouraging words or actions that foster a sense of safety, facilitate the process of idea expression and participation in conversations. With such encouragement, introverted students feel more valued, which motivates them to engage more boldly in communication.

Emotional support from peers not only boosts the self-confidence of introverted students but also reinforces their communication skills. When introverted students feel hesitant or anxious about expressing their opinions in social or academic settings, their peers serve as communication facilitators, offering encouragement to participate. Cheraghi et al. (2021) highlight that peer support significantly influences the learning of communication skills. Research by Katz et al. (2020) also demonstrates that building positive peer relationships can foster resilience in students with developmental disabilities. The presence of peers who offer mutual understanding creates a conducive atmosphere, where introverted students feel safer and more open to speaking. This process allows introverted students to face communication situations they might have previously avoided, while simultaneously enhancing their interpersonal communication skills.

In interviews with introverted students, most participants emphasized the

importance of emotional support in strengthening their confidence to communicate. Coyle et al. (2021) Note that peers play a role in helping individuals overcome social anxiety, both in person and online. In an interview on Thursday, December 19th, P1 and P5 stated.

*“ I feel more comfortable speaking when my friends provide support and encourage me to speak, even though I initially feel unsure.”*

This statement indicates that emotional encouragement from peers plays a significant role in reducing the anxiety introverted students experience, thereby strengthening their ability to interact more effectively.

Observational results show that introverted students tend to be more active in conversations when they are in emotionally supportive groups. Sedova & Navratilova (2020) mention that social support from teachers and peers can be a significant factor in changing the participation patterns of students who are usually quiet, which in turn can impact their academic identity. Van der Meulen et al. (2021) also state that peer-based emotional support interventions have been proven to enhance communication, social acceptance, and social skills among students with special educational needs and disabilities. In group discussions involving mutually supportive peers, introverted students appeared more open, asking more questions, and sharing their opinions. The emotional encouragement provided by peers acts as a catalyst, motivating introverted students to overcome their fears and increase their participation in communication, thereby improving their social and academic skills.

Overall, the emotional support and mutual understanding provided by peers have a significant impact on the development of interpersonal communication skills in introverted students. With emotional support, introverted students not only feel more confident in interacting but can also overcome communication challenges they previously avoided. Therefore, social interactions supported by peers who understand and offer appropriate encouragement are essential in helping introverted students develop their communication skills, both in social and academic contexts.

## **Encouraging Engagement in Social Activities**

Engagement in social activities is an effective approach to encourage introverted university students to actively develop their interpersonal communication skills (Nyborg et al., 2024). Peer support plays a pivotal role in motivating introverts to participate in group discussions or social events with larger audiences (Xu et al., 2020). WeChat has been commonly adopted for supporting academic group discussions. Many studies have explored how teacher facilitation affects students' learning performance in the synchronous or asynchronous discussion settings. However, the conclusions are not consistent and there is relative less research about the effects of teacher role on student engagement in the context of online discussion using the semi-synchronous tool-WeChat. This study began by identifying three dimensions of student engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. A quasi-experiment was then conducted to compare student engagement among experiment groups (with teacher facilitation). These activities provide real, dynamic contexts in which introverted students can practice and refine their communication skills, facilitating their interactions with a diverse range of individuals in broader social environments.

Introverted students often experience discomfort or hesitation in social situations involving many people (Chung, 2021). However, peer encouragement can foster a sense of security and confidence, enabling them to take the initiative to participate (Rizzi et al., 2020). Research by Anggraini & Lubis (2024) underscores that peer relationships can significantly influence a student's self-confidence, either constructively or detrimentally. Hassan & Schmidt (2024) further emphasize the importance of peer support in helping children overcome anxiety and avoidance behaviors by offering social reinforcement or serving as confident role models, particularly in tasks such as classroom presentations. Through peer-led involvement, introverted students feel more at ease engaging in conversations and group discussions, which, in turn, promotes their communication development. They learn to articulate ideas, construct arguments, and respond appropriately without excessive fear or anxiety.

Tang & Walker-Gleaves (2022) highlight that peer support is especially effective for students who are introverted and anxious about expressing their

opinions publicly. Through collaborative group discussions and project-based learning, such students are more likely to voice their thoughts after receiving peer affirmation and support as P2 and P6 shared in an interview.

*“My friends often invite me to join group discussions. At first, I felt awkward, but after participating a few times, I felt more comfortable speaking and sharing my ideas.”*

This testimonial illustrates how peer encouragement serves as a strong motivator for introverted students to step out of their comfort zones and engage more actively in social contexts. Through such engagement, they gradually overcome social anxiety and improve their communication skills.

Heitmann et al. (2024) found that peer support in group settings helps students who feel isolated develop a stronger sense of self-worth, social acceptance, and confidence. Observational data from discussion groups suggest that introverted students tend to become more open and engaged when encouraged by supportive peers. Students who were previously passive and withdrawn during discussions became more involved following positive peer interaction. This reflects the critical role of a supportive social environment in helping introverted students overcome communication barriers and build the confidence necessary for public speaking and interaction.

In conclusion, fostering introverted students' participation in social activities through peer encouragement is a crucial strategy for enhancing their interpersonal communication skills. Social engagement offers them valuable opportunities to practice interacting across varied contexts, ultimately contributing to their growth in confidence and communicative competence (Huang, 2024). With adequate support, introverted students can thrive and feel more comfortable engaging with others beyond controlled or intimate settings.

### **Non-Verbal Communication Skills through Peer Interaction**

Nonverbal communication skills, including eye contact, facial expressions, and body language, are fundamental components of effective interpersonal communication (Hammick & Lee, 2014)(Ishikawa et al., 2010). For introverted

students—who tend to focus more on internal thoughts and verbal articulation than on expressive behaviors—developing nonverbal communication skills is essential to improving the quality of their social interactions (Masek & Masduki, 2017). According to Tanner et al. (2017) peer-based learning and teaching development, feedback can strengthen professional relationships and enhance overall communication quality. In this context, peer interaction serves as a significant learning mechanism for improving nonverbal communication skills. By observing more expressive peers, introverted students can learn and adapt their own self-expression techniques.

Research J. Dong et al. (2022) highlights that introverts often struggle with emotional expression due to their reserved nature and heightened sensitivity. As a result, they tend to internalize their feelings rather than express them openly. Observations indicate that introverted students frequently struggle to express emotions or opinions, both verbally and nonverbally, which can hinder the effectiveness of their communication. However, through social interaction with peers who possess more developed nonverbal communication skills, introverted students gain concrete examples of how to effectively use facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact to reinforce verbal messages. In this learning process, expressive peers act as important role models, guiding introverted students in developing similar competencies.

Grebelsky-Lichtman & Gur-Dick (2024) i.e. verbal and nonverbal, gendered communication patterns of female physicians in senior management positions (governmental and health authorities argue that peer support enhances the use of nonverbal communication as a key tool for managing social expectations and improving satisfaction and collaboration in professional environments. In an interview conducted on Thursday, December 19, 2024, students named P3, P8, and P10 shared.

*“ At first, I felt very uncomfortable maintaining eye contact or showing facial expressions while speaking. But after interacting with friends who were more open and expressive, I gradually began to use more body language and eye contact. “*

This statement illustrates how introverted students can progressively improve their nonverbal communication through peer modeling and encouragement.

Peers serve as supportive figures who help introverted individuals feel more at ease as they expand their communication styles. Overall, peer interaction plays a critical role in the development of nonverbal communication skills among introverted students. Through peer-driven social learning, introverts can acquire new competencies that enrich the way they communicate and connect with others. This type of learning not only improves the overall quality of their communication but also enhances their confidence in engaging more openly and expressively ultimately strengthening their interpersonal relationships.

## **Discussion**

This section should explain the research results in relation to those of previous studies. It should be critically analyzed and linked to the relevant current literature, giving the analysis results substantial meaning and providing a comparison with the findings of previous studies. Additionally, this section should highlight the implications of the findings and address the strengths and limitations of the study. It is essential to avoid merely repeating the results section. This study explores the role of peer interaction in supporting the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in the Islamic Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that introverted students tend to feel more comfortable engaging in small groups or with supportive peers rather than in larger forums or with unfamiliar individuals. Social support from peers was found to significantly influence their level of participation in discussions and their willingness to express opinions, ultimately strengthening their interpersonal communication skills.

Empirical evidence indicates that emotional support and a safe social environment provided by peers contribute substantially to enhancing introverted students' confidence in communication (Bakhtiar & Suwandi, 2022)(Nadiv & Ricon, 2022). Conversely, the absence of such support may exacerbate feelings of awkwardness and reluctance to engage in academic or social activities (Coyle et al., 2021). These findings reinforce the notion that peer relationships function as a crucial bridge in helping introverted students overcome psychological barriers, such as fear of mistakes and anxiety over criticism, that often hinder the development of their communication competencies.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated that peer social support

plays a pivotal role in reducing social anxiety and increasing student participation in group discussions (Sedova & Navratilova, 2020)(Tang & Walker-Gleaves, 2022). Unlike previous studies, which predominantly employed quantitative approaches, this research offers a phenomenological perspective that captures the lived experiences of introverted students in the context of Islamic higher education. Through this qualitative lens, the study highlights not only psychological barriers, such as fear of mistakes and anxiety about criticism, but also cultural and institutional dimensions that shape communication development. Importantly, the findings reveal that peer relationships serve as the primary bridge through which introverted students gradually build confidence, engage in academic discourse, and develop nonverbal communication skills. These insights challenge the dominant assumption that institutional programs alone can overcome communication barriers; rather, informal peer interactions appear to play a more decisive role.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings underscore the need to integrate peer-based models into the framework of interpersonal communication in higher education, particularly in collectivist, religiously grounded contexts such as Islamic universities. Practically, the study emphasizes the importance of establishing peer-mentoring programs, inclusive discussion forums, and small-group collaborations as sustainable strategies to support introverted learners.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations: its focus on a single academic program restricts generalizability, and the absence of longitudinal data prevents conclusions about long-term impacts. Future research should therefore evaluate communication training and peer-support interventions in more structured ways across diverse Islamic educational settings. Despite these limitations, the study makes a novel contribution by positioning peer interaction not merely as a complement but as a central mechanism in the development of interpersonal communication skills among introverted students in Islamic higher education.

## **Conclusion**

This study highlights that the role of peers is highly significant in supporting the communication adaptation process of introverted students. Through emotional support, the provision of safe spaces for expression, and the presence of positive communicative role models, peers contribute substantially to the gradual improvement of introverted students' interpersonal communication skills.

Based on these findings, educators, program administrators, and policymakers in Islamic education need to create spaces for interaction that are sensitive to individual differences and promote communication practices rooted in Islamic values, such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), and *ihsan* (excellence in conduct). Introverted students will be better able to develop their interpersonal communication competencies. Ultimately, these efforts will help shape a generation of Muslim intellectuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethical and capable of making meaningful contributions to society. This study has limitations in terms of the number of participants and the specific context, meaning that its findings cannot yet be generalized and are subject to the researcher's potential bias in interpreting the data. For future studies, it is recommended to broaden the participant pool, adopt a mixed-methods approach, and test the findings across diverse contexts to enhance their validity.

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