# The roles of interpersonal skills for teachers to learn Islamic Religious Education online

**Guntur Cahyono[1], Purnomo [2]**
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga, Salatiga, Indonesia
Email: gunturcy@uinsalatiga.ac.id
[2]Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga, Salatiga, Indonesia
Email: purnomo@uinsalatiga.ac.id

**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to find out about the problems of applying interpersonal skills for Islamic Religious Education teachers in remote Islamic Religious Education learning at Kartasura District Middle School in 2021 and its alternative solutions. This study used a field qualitative method. Interviews and observation results provide primary data. Secondary data in the form of documentation is studied to obtain a clear picture of the research subject. This study shows that the problems of interpersonal communication between teachers and students during distance Islamic education learning are in the form of 1. Online media makes communication less memorable, tiring, and unidirectional. 2. To improve effective communication, teachers must spend more time outside of the classroom and involve students' parents. 3. There are distractions in the student and teacher environment that interfere with attention. Alternative solutions to these problems are: 1. Teachers need to emphasize the importance of quality communication over quantity and duration through role distribution for all students and refreshing students' minds before learning. 2. Fellow Islamic Education teachers and teachers in other fields of study can create collaborative learning to maximize the teaching process and also enable assignments that can accommodate cross-subject material. 3. Teachers need to strengthen effective relationships and communication to reduce the effects of environmental distractions.
Keywords:
Communication; Interpersonal; Islamic Religious Education; Learning; Remote

**Abstrak:** *Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana problematika penerapan keterampilan interpersonal bagi guru PAI dalam pembelajaran PAI jarak jauh di SMP Kecamatan Kartasura tahun 2021, dan alternatif solusinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualtiataif lapangan. Data primer berasal dari wawancara dan hasil obeservasi. Data skunder berupa dokumentasi dikaji untuk mepadapatkan gambaran yang lugas tentang subyek penelitian. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa problematika komunikasi interpersonal antara guru dan siswa selama pembelajaran PAI jarak jauh, berupa: 1. Media daring menjadikan komunikasi kurang berkesan, melelahkan dan terkesan searah. 2. Guru memerlukan waktu tambahan di luar kelas dan melibatkan orang tua siswa untuk meningkatkan komunikasi efektif. 3. Ada distraksi di lingkungan siswa dan guru yang mengganggu atensi. Alternatif solusi untuk problematika tersebut adalah: 1. Guru perlu menekankan pentingnya kualitas komunikasi bukan pada kuantitas dan durasi melalui distribusi peran bagi seluruh siswa dan penyegaran pikiran siswa sebelum pembelajaran. 2. Sesama guru PAI maupun guru bidang studi lain dapat menciptakan pembelajaran kolaboratif untuk memaksimalkan proses pengajaran dan memungkinkan juga penugasan yang dapat mewadahi materi lintas mata pelajaran 3. Guru perlu menguatkan relasi dan komunikasi efektif untuk mengurangi efek distraksi lingkungan.*
Kata Kunci:
*Komunikasi; Interpesnonal; Jarak Jauh; Pembelajaran, Pendidikan Agama Islam*

## INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal skill refers to communication, persuasion, empathy establishment, problem-solving, leading, organizing, relationship establishment, and collaboration. The skill is important to develop basic socialization skills (Oviyanti, 2017). An individual with interpersonal skills could understand, negotiate, motivate, and create excellent relationships with other parties (Sakdiah, 2015). Communication, within the context of interpersonal correlation, is not merely a sending process or information exchange. Communication creates a minimum resilience relationship because communication acknowledges every party's presence (Dwiayuni, 2019). Interpersonal skill also refers to verbal and non-verbal communication to create a harmonious bond between communicators and communicants.

Interpersonal skill is useful for teachers. The skill allows teachers to manage the class especially learners with neutral and open minded (Kurniasih, 2017). Interpersonal skills could foster and bind the relationship between teachers and learners. Interpersonal skills could reduce the possibility of conflict due to miscommunication (Sakdiah, 2015). Those things are crucial for teachers to promote the excellent teaching-learning process.

In the pandemic situation, teachers had to apply interpersonal skills due to the implementation of distance learning. The pandemic situation shifted the teaching-learning activities from offline to online and brought various challenges for the teachers. Teachers had to apply interpersonal skills so that the learners could respect their presence although they held the meeting via online media. The situation made the learning complicated. Teachers could not also promote physical contact to improve the teacher-learner relationship and create excellent communication.

This research analyzed the problems of the applied interpersonal skills by the teachers of Islamic religious education during the distance learning at the Junior High School of Kartasura district in 2021. This research also attempted to determine the solutions. In the Kartasura district, from the academic year of 2020/2021, all schools applied distance learning including Islamic religious education for JHS. The situation resembled the follow-up action of the central government's policy and regional government's policy to promote online learning instead of face-to-face learning.

The teachers of Islamic religious education during distance learning had to practice interpersonal skills. This matter was useful in achieving the learning objectives within the unideal situation. Online learning might bring negative effects on communication and learning quality, such as losing formal impression, limited personal communication, the emergence of the personal communication barrier, technical noise from the communication device, loneliness, isolation, and exhaustion (Fadhal, 2020). These matters must be solutions to create a new culture in managing the class to prevent serious problems during the learning promotion and to prevent learning loss. Heretofore, the pandemic has been fading but one day a certain pandemic may occur again. Therefore, a review is important to anticipate a similar occurrence.

Lucky, Rianatha, and Dian Savitri, in a research titled "Hubugnan antara Komunikasi Interpersonal Guru-Siswa dengan *Self-Regulated Learning* pada Siswa SMAN 9 Semarang," found the correlation between teacher interpersonal communication and learner capability to apply self-regulated learning. High interpersonal communication quality of teachers and learners leads to excellent self-regulated learning of learners. Self-regulated learning refers to learners' skills to find out their talents in learning, learning patterns and strategies, and the directed learning orientation (Rianatha & Sawitri, 2015). Interpersonal communication in the face-to-face mode is different from media-based interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication brings various challenges and hindrances than face-to-face communication.

Makhmud Zulkifli investigated the role of interpersonal communication. The research title is "Peranan Komunikasi Interpersonal Guru dalam Meningkatkan Pengetahuan Anak (Studi pada Guru-guru di PAUD Kharisma dan PAUD Lestari)". The researcher found the communication process between teachers and learners during the learning process, the approach variety, and the applied communication by the teachers for the learners. The research revealed the capability of interpersonal communication to improve the learners' cognition with accurate diction implementation and non-verbal communication variety of the teachers (Zulkifli, 2019). A study by Makhmud Zulkifli focused more on the impacts of teacher interpersonal communication on the learners. However, the current research has a different focus, the teachers' perspectives to elaborate and manage the communication problems.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This field research applied a qualitative approach. The nature of this research is descriptive. Thus, the researchers explained the occurring phenomenon on the research subjects to describe the facts (Barlian, 2016). The research sites were the Junior High Schools around Kartasura district from July 1, 2021 - November 31, 2021.

The primary data source was - the teachers of Islamic religious education from all Junior High Schools in the Kartasura district. The secondary data sources were the Islamic religious education documents during a pandemic, the IEL documented activities, and related activities with IEL such as visitation, inter-teacher coordination, and teacher-parent communication.

The applied data collection techniques were observation, interview, and documentation. The researchers applied the non-participant observation. Thus, the researchers were not directly involved in the informants' activities. The applied interview was the unstructured interview based on the arrangement of relevant theories. The documented matters were various documents related to IEL during distance learning. The applied data analysis technique was inductive data analysis. The researchers analyzed the data to conclude. The researchers checked the data with methodological triangulation. Triangulation refers to a rechecking process among the interview results, the observation data, and the

available documents (Moleong, 2017). This research applied technique and source triangulations.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**The Interpersonal Communication Problems of Teachers and Learners in Islamic Religious Education during the Distant Learning**

Since the implementation of distance learning, teachers have become very active in using the internet as an information source, to collaborate with their peers, and to join various trainings to empower the related technological mastery for online learning (Interview Results with Karomah Indarwati and Wasithotul Mishriyah, August 28-29, 2021). The interpersonal skill to facilitate teachers' problem recognition and communication problem-solving with the learners is correlated to mechanical problems, such as communication media problems (Dwiayuni, 2019). Interpersonal skill facilitates teachers to choose the most reliable technology for learner-learning communication.

The collaboration between the teachers of Islamic religious education at junior high schools in Kartasura district and the institutional peers reflects the social relationship capability as the interpersonal skill parts. Interpersonal skill refers to goal-directed behavior in determining an excellent social relationship (Sakdiah, 2015). The absence of excellent relationships among all educational elements will provide various challenges for distance learning. Excellent relationship occurs along with dialog transparency among the teachers, proven with effective relationship. The indication of an effective relationship includes the transparent dialog to elicit ideas, understanding, empathy, supportive attitude, positive perception, and perception of equality (Dwiayuni, 2019).

Equality should not only occur among teachers but also in teacher-learner relationships. Learning will be excellent if the teachers involve learners in making possible decisions, such as new learning methods and media. Unfortunately, the distant learning process of Islamic religious education in Kartasura district could not widen the learner participation in selecting the related learning media and model even the learning used the learners' responses as the reflection and correction (Interview Result with Karomah Indarwati and Tusno Widjayanto, August 28, 2021).

High learner participation in making related decisions could encourage harmonious relationships. The participation of all members in the efforts of making decisions becomes part of strategies to relieve the resistance against the changes (Dwiayuni, 2019). Learners would find acknowledged and realize to adhere to the decisions.

Classes have various and unlimited dynamics in terms of learners' problems to understand the learning and broader and vulnerable relationships between teachers and learners with problems. Therefore, teachers must have excellent social insight. Social insight refers to the understanding capability and problem-solving skill for any encountered problems (Oviyanti, 2017). Social insight would be realized along with excellent and persuasive communication.

The related problems with the applied technology in distance learning require excellent communication. The problems do not only deal with technological mastery and limited adequate facilities (Interview Result with Febri Endras Prastyo, August 28, 2021). The efforts of managing the problems require the teachers to apply interpersonal roles and to create conducive learning climates with informative action and dialogic, persuasive, and instructive attitudes (Dwiayuni, 2019). The first one is - informative. Teachers must be consistent in providing accurate information about the current condition. Teachers provide relevant problem descriptions within distance learning and alternative communication media by explaining the superioritys and drawbacks of each choice.

Secondly, teachers must remain dialogic, transparent, open-minded, and having the willingness to listen to the learners' notions. Learners are the educational subjects that must receive broader opportunities to actively deliver the notion and to realize excellent learning. Teachers must respond to the learners' notions positively. The different perspectives between teachers and learners make teachers have high positions.

Thirdly, teachers must persuade the learners, to influence the learners, to actively take the roles in various classes. The willingness of teachers to conduct dialogs with the learners is not maximum if the teachers do not develop the open-mindedness and the bravery to share arguments.

The fourth one is - the instructive matter. Teachers must realize their positions as instructors of the learners to keep the focus and direct the limitation. The freedom of learners must have clear limitations. Initial communication about the limitations is important for the teachers and learners to keep their proportion.

Besides the technological selection of communication, teachers must have the capability to realize technological discipline. Teachers must have the responsibility to guide, apply, understand, and improve the skills correctly. Heretofore, various contents of social media and games influence distant learning (Interview Result with Nugroho, August 30, 2021). Teachers cannot supervise the learners every time but teachers must direct and guide them.

Teachers with exemplary and aspiring images for the learners could easily influence the learners' personalities (Arfandi & Samsudin, 2021). Therefore, teachers must be excellent figures for the learners. The indications of excellent figures include the instructions and persuasive and motivational capabilities. Interpersonal skill provides long-term impacts on teacher and learner relationship (Pontoh, 2013). Teachers cannot accompany the learners for the whole day but they could develop and prevent the incorrect technological implementations.

Excellent quality and intense communication among teachers and learners will support the classroom activities. Most Islamic religious education teachers have the initiation to create positive relationships with the learners through phone-call communication or face-to-face communication, the visitation (Interview Results of Karomah Indarwati and Fauzi Nugroho, August 28 and 30,

2021). Teachers should not demand visitation but they must have the willingness to visit the learners. This matter indicates the egalitarian and kind attitudes of teachers. A teacher with excellent positioning skills toward the learners could create effective communication (Sutapa, 2006). The fostered intimacy could facilitate the teachers to develop credibility with trust, supportive attitude, transparency, and empathy with direct meetings or visits. (Patriana, 2014).

A visitation or an effort of visiting learners could make the teachers comprehend the situation and make them join the online class from home. Teachers could share their empathy and understand the problems from learners' perspectives. Empathy refers to the support of realizing effective communication (Sutapa, 2006). Effective communication refers to the key to achieving excellent relationships between teachers and learners. Excellent communication could make the teachers easily direct and persuade the learners to achieve the targeted learning objectives (Rianatha & Sawitri, 2015).

Any communication with online application implementation makes learners inactive and late joining the class. In some cases, learners may also leave the classes and do not submit the tasks. The underlying reason for the learner, about the lateness or absence, was - a lack of internet balance (Interview Result with Karomah Indarwati, August 28, 2021). Indiscipline behaviors of the learners could influence the teachers' emotions. Goleman explains that emotional management becomes a construct of interpersonal skills (Sakdiah, 2015). Interpersonal skill does not always deal with creating excellent relationship with other individuals but instead creating excellent self-relationship. Teachers must have excellent control to prevent emotional swings while meeting any indiscipline learners.

The tranquil attitude to cope with various problems becomes the fundamental success to foster excellent relationships with the learners. Excellent interpersonal skills could make teachers solve various conflicts accurately, negotiate, and cooperate (Sakdiah, 2015). Teachers must find the problem roots of learners' indiscipline, such as personal problems, technical matters, or learning enthusiasm toward the lesson. Teachers cannot deny any possibility of learners lying. Yet, some teachers could not control the learners' honesty and behaviors (Interview Result with Wasithotul Mishriyah, August 29, 2021). With an excellent understanding of the problems, the formulated solutions will be accurate.

Social insight refers to the skill of understanding any situation and finding excellent solutions for various conflicting parties within social relationships (Oviyanti, 2017). Teachers with interpersonal skills could solve conflicts accurately, negotiate, and cooperatively collaborate (Sakdiah, 2015). Any absent learners with the reason of having technical problems must receive intensive discussion to obtain reliable and permanent solutions.

Besides the elaborated problems, the potential problems of teacher-learner interpersonal communication during distance learning are:
a. The tendency of having one-directed communication from teachers to learners due to limited time, boredom, and fatigue

b. Lack of responses and communications of the communicators due to monologue lectures of the teachers This situation could lead to the feeling of being neglected and isolated. In this case, the communicators are not fully within the scope of the communicators. Thus, communication loses its meaning.

c. online communication fatigue This fatigue occurs due to looking at the devices for a long period. Thus, the learners may lose their attention and concentration.

d. Direct communication is vulnerable to environmental distortions, such as a non-conducive environment.

e. The possibilities of the communicants and communicators to promote other activities while learning. Thus, the information transmission process does not run excellently.

f. The communication technology problems Learners do not receive equal technological access opportunities.

**The Solution Alternatives for Interpersonal Communication Problems of the Teachers and Learners in Islamic Religious Education during the Distant Learning**

Distance learning made the teachers expect to promote face-to-face learning with the learners (Interview Result with Karomah Indarwati, August 28, 2021). Online media communication could not replace face-to-face learning. Thus, many teachers kept visiting the learners from door to door to realize intensive communication. If distant learning lasts for a long period, the teachers might apply an online and offline learning combination as an alternative (Aris Hilmi Mubarok, August 28, 2021). The online learning process may lead to a media equation, a situation of assuming gadgets as communication partners. The most observable fact about gadget for both teachers and learners is - that gadget is merely the cause of alienation (Fadhal, 2020). This matter makes the teachers keep the face-to-face learning although the online learning media development is not promising.

Besides the feeling of alienation because of the lack of real interactions with humans, excessive implementation of learning applications may lead to physical and mental health problems. The learners had difficulties finding joy because of minimum communication and formal impression during the online learning. Therefore, the teachers promoted a session to make the learners scientifically interact with each other, have fun with each other, and have a nice chit-chat in an offline class. In this case, a class does not only become a learning place but also a place to interact socially and to enjoy the togetherness with the classmates.

Online communication media, based on text, requires the implementation of different norms and etiquette. The roles of text-based messages did not have intonation and expression from the writers. This matter might lead to complex comprehension. This process may trigger biases, prejudices, and emotions during communication. Heretofore, norms, etiquette, and culture do not receive serious attention. Therefore, any participating party in online communication must apply the standard etiquette, norms, and culture of offline communication

that may be vulnerable to misunderstanding and conflict. Besides that, text-based communication could decrease inter-individual trust while communicating due to the different visible gestures (Ayun, 2016).

As distance learning occurs, many teachers rely on video recording and PowerPoint slides as the learning media along with live video conferences. A recording could make the learners see the asynchronous reality. Therefore, a recording could not realize bidirectional communication. A video cannot feel the sensation of the viewers. A video does not have any empathy or effective communication. Therefore, the effort of managing the problems requires the teachers to change the focus after sharing the videos. Teachers should not follow the displayed videos but keep the focus on every learner's reactions. One of the interpersonal skills is - having social sensitivity toward feelings, reactions, and personal change (Oviyanti, 2017).

The nearly similar communication to direct meetings is - live broadcast via video conference. However, this matter requires adequate facilities and infrastructure. Teachers cannot force the learners to always use video conferences for every teaching session. The effective correlation is observable in the supportive action and positive perception toward the problems (Dwiayuni, 2019). Learners should not only understand one another but must support and synergy to turn the problems into solutions. Both parties could turn the problems in the video conference as references to explore various service provider applications and to put the most relevant necessities. Both parties must not only focus on popular applications. Many alternatives are ready to experience. A transparent dialog could lead to a solution for all parties. The dialog transparency refers to an effective correlation (Dwiayuni, 2019). Teachers and school parties must be transparent to hold the dialog with the learners and parents about the learning implementation.

Social relationships could direct harmony and cooperation or instead fail (Sujarwanto, 2012). A healthy dialog may not create an expected solution because the dialog allows anyone to understand the difficulties. Excellent interpersonal communication during the dialog made meaningful learning and provided long-term influence for both parties (Pontoh, 2013).

Online communication via video conference is inseparable from problems. Uncomfortable learners with low confidence during the presentation occurred due to all the attention on them (Emeilia & Muntazah, 2021). Learners tend to behave passively and avoid any unpleasant situation while being the center of online conferences.

Various forums to find alternative learning models should be more aspirant. The forums must involve various parties along with teachers, parents, and learners. An effective relationship puts all parties equally, supportively, comprehensively, and emphatically to solve the problems. The learning development should not only be based on the teacher's or schools' interests but also on the parents and the learners. Parents will find themselves respected while the learners will find themselves feeling to own the class. This effective

relationship with all parties will prioritize a positive attitude to cope with various problems.

Parental participation in finding solutions and alternatives becomes an excellent matter with various risks and challenges. This matter had both positive and negative meanings. The positive side was - the parents had to be more active in supervising their children's learning, taking roles to determine solutions, and being more intensive in communicating with the school party. Parents, in certain communications, become the teachers' extensive assistants to explain various technical matters about the implementation of applications or learning patterns. At schools, the home teachers had to create forums for the parents to share their children's daily learning. Some schools also held parenting seminars for the parents to accompany their children in learning during the pandemic, for example, the Integrated Islamic Junior High School Taqiyya Rosyida, Kartasura. The teachers and the school had to prepare the parents with problem-solving skills to take care of their children with incapability to understand the teachers' explanations. Besides seminars, many schools also held dialog sessions to evaluate the learning process. Many activities with the parents applied in an online manner because the parents denied home visitation. The most acceptable offline communication was - the grade report session with the lowest frequency (Interview Result with Febri Endras Prastyo, October 11, 2021).

The negative side was - not all parents had adequate time to supervise their children's learning. Most schooling times occurred at the same times the parents worked. Thus, the parents could not accompany the children during the online learning. The parents had daily jobs and felt exhausted from accompanying their children after the workplace. The school's incapability to provide excellent control and the ignorance of the parents led to various extreme cases on the learners. For example, learners who did not work on their tasks for a long period. In the school, the teachers just found a learner who did not work on his tasks until the middle of the semester (Interview Result with Febri Endras Prastyo, October 11, 2021). Some parents found that they had given their responsibilities to the schools or educational institutions. Thus, they thought they should not participate in the learning monitoring process. Proper anticipation was important to manage school-parent communication and to create the same perception about the roles of both parties during the pandemic.

Excellent relationships between schools and parents become the supportive factors of distant learning. The main factor in this case is the relationship between teachers and learners. Besides the teachers, learners found the most change from offline to online learning. The learners must encounter various challenges and problems during distance learning. Here are the solutions for the encountered problems.

1. One directed communication occurred due to low feedback from the learners. Therefore, any efforts to increase learner participation must apply entertaining elements to ensure communication. Communication is not merely about message delivery but also entertainment media. Communication as an entertainment

matter makes the learning process joyful (Toharudin, 2020). Entertainment does not merely become an attribute in a learning method but entertainment becomes the primary focus for certain sessions of a learning. Teachers must plan excellent entertainment to make the learners joyful. Teachers could invite the learners to virtually sightsee the virtual museum or to visit historical locations in the Islamic world with various virtual service sites  www.360tr.com. This activity should be free or should not be correlated to learning materials because the objective is to refresh the learners' mood and improve their readiness to accept the materials. Entertainment provides amazing therapy for an individual (Elfiky, 2017). A tranquil mind after enjoying entertainment could improve communication quality during distance learning. The teachers could also apply religious approaches by inviting the learners to remember Allah, *dhikr,* due to the significant role of controlling the learners' emotions (Hasbiyallah et al., 2022).

2. Both communicators and communicants did not feel an intimate relationship while having online communication. This matter led to alienation feeling. Learners with alienated or isolated feelings did not have the resilience to focus and keep up with the class. Therefore, teachers must arrange the learning scenario that creates equal roles for all learners. Every learner must take certain roles to improve their presence. However, if they do not have any certain roles, their presence gets lower and this situation leads to an incomplete class atmosphere.

The teachers of Islamic religious education, similarly to other teachers, must promote collaborative teachings. The teachers must carry out their roles to share the materials while other teachers coordinate the classroom. This collaboration is applicable for assignments, cross-lesson material for better-structured tasks, and efforts to relieve the learners' burdens.

3. online communication fatigue Forcing the learners to endure the lengthy learning duration and looking at the screen for a long period did not bring any advantages. Naturally, an individual concentration and attention decrease for some moments after the beginning of the activity. Teachers must develop a distance learning model that does not obligate the lengthy and rigid online duration. The teachers of Islamic religious education must cooperate with other teachers with other lessons to create assignments and improve the activities efficiently. Islamic religious education must develop interactive and accessible modules for the learners. This effort could focus on the assessment and develop effective communication. Some online counseling or modules, such as Ruangguru or Quipper, could be excellent references for teachers to make similar but personal modules. The presence of teachers may include non-real-time presence, such as cognitive presence. The facility of cognition presence could be exploration, integration, and resolution (Chaeruman, 2020). Teachers should not apply similar communication between online and offline activities. The applied communication must be adaptive toward the socio-cultural developments. Thus, learners could accept and understand (Ahmad, 2019)

4. Online learning classes were vulnerable to situational distortion and any involving parties. This matter made the communication not maximum, such as

the emergence of other activities during the learning process. The evidence of this finding was observable outside of classroom learning. The learners might learn from certain learning sites without any uniforms. The absence of problem-solving alternatives occurred because of the incapability of the school to facilitate each house of the learner. Therefore, the teachers had to create transparent, supportive, egalitarian, and empathic relationships. These are the factors to promote effective communication (Sutapa, 2006). Effective communication could solve the negative impacts of a less supportive environment because the participating individuals care for each other. Thus, the environment cannot distract them.

## CONCLUSION

This research found that distant learning had some interpersonal communication problems between the teachers and the learners such as 1. The applied online media to communication, between teachers and learners, left an impression due to a lack of responses and limited attention. 2. The implementation of gadgets made the learners easily exhausted and made a one-direction communication. The teachers required additional time outside of the class and involved the learners' parents to make the learning communication effective. 3. Teacher-learner interaction received various distractions from both learners' and teachers' environments. The alternative solutions to solve interpersonal communication problems during distant learning are: 1. Teachers must emphasize the importance of communication quality instead of quantity and duration by distributing the roles equally and refreshing the learners' mood. 2. Teachers must improve the inter-teacher collaboration with cross-lesson collaborative learning. 3. Teachers must realize effective communicative relationships with the learners. Teachers also must establish excellent and close relationships intensively both inside the class and outside the class.

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