

The Role of Persuasive Communication through Positive Affirmations in Enhancing Self-Efficacy of Elementary School Students: An Islamic Educational Psychology Perspective

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The Role of Persuasive Communication through Positive Affirmations in Enhancing Self-Efficacy of Elementary School Students: An Islamic Educational Psychology Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores the role of persuasive communication through positive affirmations in enhancing the self-efficacy of elementary school students in Desa Cisalak, with a focus on Islamic Educational Psychology. The research uses a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach to understand the experiences of teachers and students regarding positive affirmations in the classroom. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation from 14 participants, including 4 teachers and 10 students. The findings show that persuasive communication through positive affirmations plays a significant role in shaping students' self-efficacy by reinforcing their belief in their abilities and motivating them to engage more actively in learning. Positive affirmations foster a growth mindset, aligning with Islamic principles of self-improvement and trust in Allah's guidance. However, challenges such as the lack of parental support and peer pressure hinder the effectiveness of affirmations. The research suggests that a supportive ecosystem, involving both school and home, is essential for affirmations to be effective. The study provides practical insights for educators, emphasizing verbal encouragement, positive reinforcement, and creating an environment that nurtures both cognitive and spiritual development in students. This research contributes to the understanding of self-efficacy in Islamic education and offers strategies for enhancing students' academic motivation and personal growth.

Keywords: Positive Affirmations, Persuasive Communication, Self-Efficacy, Islamic Educational Psychology.

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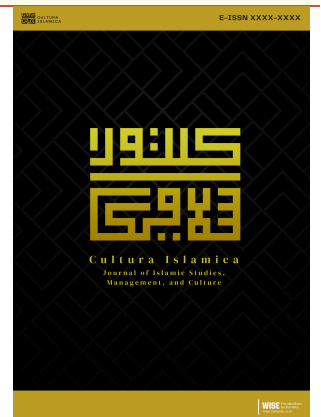
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INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental foundation for building a civilized and knowledgeable human civilization [1], [2]. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), learning is not merely a process of transferring knowledge, but an act of worship aimed at shaping a complete human being (*insan kamil*) with a strong sense of self-belief [3], [4], [5]. In elementary school environments, self-efficacy becomes a crucial element that determines students' academic success [6], [7], [8]. However, for students in rural areas such as Desa Cisalak, this potential is often hindered by limited access to information and an environment that does not support the development of a winner's mentality. Low self-efficacy in students in developing areas often manifests in the form of a pessimistic attitude and fear of making mistakes [9], [10]. Theologically, this attitude contradicts the principle of optimism in Islam, where every individual is prohibited from despairing of Allah's mercy [11], [12], [13]. Students often feel incapable of competing because they feel "left behind" in terms of facilities. Therefore, an approach is needed that addresses not only the cognitive aspects but also the spiritual and emotional dimensions to reignite their fighting spirit in the pursuit of knowledge [14], [15], [16].

Persuasive communication through positive affirmation techniques presents a strategic solution to reconstruct this mentality [17], [18]. In the context of Islam, positive affirmation aligns with the concept of *qaulan thayyiban* (good words) and *husnudzon* (having a positive view) of one's abilities that have been granted by Allah [19], [20]. Motivational words delivered persuasively by educators have the power to shift students' subconscious thoughts from doubt to belief, enabling them to be bolder in taking academic risks and facing learning challenges [21], [22], [23]. However, the implementation of positive affirmations in practice faces the challenge of environmental dissonance. At school, teachers strive to build students' self-confidence through effort-based praise, yet at home, there is often a gap in verbal support from parents [24], [25]. The lack of appreciation at the family level can undermine the internalization of the positive values built at school [26], [27], [28]. Without strong synergy between school and home, efforts to develop students' character and self-efficacy will not proceed optimally or sustainably.

Studies by Faizal Faizal [29], Najlatun Naqiyah [30], Aurana Zahro El Hasbi [31], Edy Irawan [32], and Idi Warsah [33] highlight that self-efficacy is key to learning success and psychological development. Counseling based on Islamic values has proven effective in improving self-efficacy by integrating spirituality with modern psychological techniques, showing significant improvements in all dimensions—level, generality, and strength [29]. Educators who model positive behavior and motivation also enhance students' confidence in completing tasks and facing challenges [30]. In elementary schools, optimism is positively correlated with self-efficacy (44.9%), showing that belief in the future contributes to students' self-competence [31]. Additionally, innovative counseling models, such as traditional games, have been empirically shown to enhance children's self-efficacy through significant differences in pre- and post-intervention scores [32]. Theoretically, the integration of positive psychology principles, including happiness, optimism, mindfulness, and mentoring, within Islamic education has also been proven to improve emotional well-being, learning engagement, and academic performance [33]. These findings suggest that reinforcing positive messages and spiritual values is a strategic foundation in building students' self-efficacy from an early age.

However, the existing literature still leaves a conceptual gap. Most studies focus on the effectiveness of counseling, optimism, or positive psychology in general, without specifically analyzing how persuasive communication through positive affirmations shapes self-efficacy. Previous Islamic counseling studies often view self-efficacy as a secondary outcome of psychological well-being, not as a primary construct [29]. Additionally, research on positive psychology in Islamic education tends to focus on macro strategies and values, lacking an operational micro-communication model to strengthen students' self-belief in daily learning practices [33]. Building on this gap, this study offers a novel integrative framework that connects persuasive communication, positive affirmations, and Islamic educational psychology to enhance elementary students' self-efficacy.

This innovation not only synthesizes communication, psychology, and spirituality but also positions positive affirmations as a preventive strategy that fosters psychological resilience, intrinsic motivation, and academic courage. The study aims to contribute both theoretically by expanding the self-efficacy discourse in Islamic education and practically by providing teachers with a pedagogical foundation for transformative educational interactions. This study aims to explore how persuasive communication through positive affirmations is applied and its impact on students' self-efficacy in Desa Cisalak, viewed through the lens of Islamic educational psychology. By understanding the dynamics at play, this research hopes to offer practical contributions to educators on the importance of using kind and constructive language in teaching. The success of this intervention is expected to help create a generation of Muslims who are not only intellectually intelligent but also resilient and confident in facing the challenges of a changing world.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological method [34], [35]. This approach was chosen based on the main objective of the study, which is to explore in-depth the essence of the subjective experiences of students and teachers regarding the practice of persuasive communication through positive affirmations. The study is not aimed at testing hypotheses or measuring variables statistically but focuses on examining the process of social interaction and the meaning-making that occurs in shaping students' self-efficacy in the school environment. The research was conducted in two elementary schools in Desa Cisalak, Subang Regency, West Java, over 40 days, from July 28 to August 31, 2024, coinciding with the Community Service Program (KKN).

Using purposive sampling, 14 participants were selected: 4 teachers (2 from each school) and 10 students (5 from each school). The selection criteria included teachers with intensive student interactions and students with varying levels of self-confidence to assess the impact of the affirmation intervention. Data was collected using triangulation techniques, including semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation [36]. Interviews explored perceptions of teachers and students, while observation allowed the researcher to observe verbal and non-verbal affirmations in the classroom. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis based on Miles and Huberman's model [37]. starting with data reduction, followed by descriptive data display, and ending with verification to address the research focus on persuasive communication's role in enhancing self-efficacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on data collection through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, the researcher identified various dynamics related to the implementation of positive affirmations in the school environment. The data obtained from 14 participants (4 teachers and 10 students) were then reduced and analyzed to map out the communication patterns that occurred. Generally, the research findings were grouped into three main themes: (1) Persuasive communication strategies applied by teachers, (2) Mental transformation and improvement in students' self-efficacy, and (3) Ecosystem challenges that hinder the effectiveness of affirmations. A summary of data reduction and participant response distribution is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Hierarchy of Themes, Data Codes, and Distribution of Participants' Responses

Tema Besar (Major Themes)	Sub-Tema (Sub-Themes)	Kode Data (Codes)	Partisipan Terlibat & Representasi Data
Communication Strategy	Focus on the Process	<i>Effort Praise</i>	Participants: G1, G2, G3, G4 (All Teachers). The teachers agree on emphasizing appreciation for hard work.
	Personalized Approach	<i>Touch & Whisper</i>	Participants: G2, G3. Use physical gestures for introverted students.
Mental Transformation of Students	Increased Courage	<i>Risk Taking</i>	Participants: S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S10. The majority of students feel more confident to participate.
	Emotional Safety	<i>Fear Reduction</i>	Participants: S4, S7, S8 Students feel safe from the threat of punishment.
Ecosystem Challenges	Gap in Home Support	<i>Home Support Gap</i>	Participants: S3, S5, S7, S8, S10. Students experience different treatment at home.
	Social Barriers	<i>Social Anxiety</i>	Participant: S9 (Special Case). The student feels embarrassed when praised excessively in public.

Description:

1. Participant Code

- G1 – G4: Refers to the 4 classroom teachers who are key informants. (G1 & G2 are from School A; G3 & G4 are from School B).
- S1 – S10: Refers to the 10 students who are subjects of the study, with varying levels of self-confidence.

2. Definition of Findings Code:

- Effort Praise: A type of verbal appreciation that specifically highlights students' hard work and the learning process, rather than praising innate intelligence or final grades [38], [39].

- Touch & Whisper: A non-verbal and personal communication technique used by teachers (such as patting on the back or whispering) to provide a sense of security to shy students [40], [41], [42].
- Risk Taking: An indicator of self-efficacy where students begin to take actions that carry the risk of failure (such as volunteering to answer questions in class) without excessive fear [43], [44], [45].
- Home Support Gap: A disparity condition where students receive full psychological support at school, but minimal similar support at home [46], [47], [48].

Positive Affirmations as a Mechanism of Social Persuasion in Building Self-Efficacy

The findings of this study emphasize that the positive affirmation provided by teachers serves effectively as social persuasion, which is one of the four main sources that shape self-efficacy according to Bandura's theory. In the educational context of Cisalak Village, where access to modern learning facilities is limited, the "words of the teacher" become a dominant psychological resource. When teachers offer effort praise, they instill the value of perseverance, asserting that students' abilities can grow. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this trains students to appreciate the process of struggle (mujahadah), aligning with the principle that Allah observes the sincerity of His servants, not just the final results.

This affirmation helps students understand that their efforts are valued, even though the results may not yet be perfect. The study also found that positive affirmation plays a role in building students' subconscious minds to overcome self-doubt. When students initially feel incapable of solving math or science problems, verbal persuasion from the teacher provides external encouragement that is gradually internalized into self-belief. Positive affirmation, therefore, is not merely praise; it is a strategic psychological intervention that encourages students to take more academic risks and face learning challenges with a more confident attitude.

Transition from Extrinsic Motivation to Growth Mindset

This study found that positive affirmation has a significant impact on changing students' perceptions of failure. Students who were initially afraid of making mistakes became more courageous in taking academic risks, such as volunteering to go to the front of the class. This indicates the formation of a growth mindset, where students begin to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. Theologically, this courage reflects the optimism taught in Islam, removing despair (la taqnathu), and strengthening students' belief in their own abilities after receiving verbal reinforcement from their teachers.

The findings also show that positive affirmation, which focuses on the process (process praise), teaches students to validate themselves based on their efforts, not just the final outcome. Verbal affirmation from teachers plays an important role in shaping students' optimistic attitudes toward learning. When students feel emotionally safe, because teachers do not punish their mistakes, anxiety decreases, leading to an improved capacity of the brain to learn more optimally. Thus, this study demonstrates that in rural areas, a humanistic approach through persuasive communication can be an effective alternative to enhance academic performance without requiring high costs.

Environmental Dissonance: The Importance of Triadic Educational Synergy

This study found that although positive affirmation has been proven effective in improving students' self-efficacy at school, a significant challenge arises due to "environmental dissonance." The findings indicate that many students experience a lack of similar support at home, which causes the mental reinforcement built at school to be short-lived. The absence of verbal appreciation from parents and the negative influences of the home environment hinder the internalization of positive values established at school. This suggests a disconnect between the school and home environments, where the home, as the first place of education, does not fully support the affirmation process that occurs at school.

Furthermore, the findings regarding social anxiety due to peer pressure reveal that the application of positive affirmation needs to be adjusted to meet the individual needs of students. A more personalized approach, sensitive to students' social conditions, such as using whispers or gentle touches, can help students who are more introverted or have high social anxiety. Inappropriate affirmation can make students feel alienated by their peers. Overall, these findings emphasize that while positive affirmation is a highly effective tool in building self-efficacy, its success heavily depends on a holistic support system, including family and peers, to ensure its long-term impact.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that positive affirmations provided by teachers function effectively as social persuasion, which is one of the four major sources of self-efficacy formation in Bandura's theory. In the educational context of Cisalak Village, where access to modern learning facilities remains limited, teachers' words become the most dominant psychological resource. When teachers provide effort praise, they instill the value of *ikhtiar*, emphasizing that students' abilities can develop through sustained effort [49], [50], [51]. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, this process trains students to value struggle and perseverance (*mujahadah*), in line with the principle that Allah values the sincerity and earnest striving of His servants, rather than merely their final outcomes [52], [53].

This finding is consistent with the view that affirmation is a form of statement that shapes the subconscious mind in order to foster positive behavior. Such verbal interaction helps students overcome self-doubt [54], [55], [56]. Students who initially feel incapable of solving mathematics or science problems may gradually develop self-confidence through teachers' verbal persuasion, which serves as an external form of encouragement that is progressively internalized as personal belief. Thus, positive affirmation is not merely a form of superficial praise, but rather a strategic psychological intervention aimed at enhancing students' courage to take academic risks.

This study found that positive affirmation can reshape students' perceptions of failure. Students who were initially afraid of making mistakes became more willing to come forward in front of the class, indicating the emergence of a growth mindset. Theologically, this courage represents a manifestation of optimism and the absence of despair (*la taqnathu*), as students began to develop confidence in their own abilities after receiving verbal reinforcement, in line with Dweck's explanation. Through affirmations focused on the learning process (process praise), students learn to validate themselves based on effort rather than merely on final outcomes.

This finding supports previous studies [57], [58] which emphasize that teachers' verbal support is crucial in shaping students' optimistic attitudes toward learning. In this study, positive affirmation served as a bridge between extrinsic motivation, in the form of teacher praise, and intrinsic motivation, reflected in students' satisfaction with learning [59], [60]. When students feel emotionally safe because teachers do not punish their mistakes, the cognitive burden caused by anxiety is reduced, allowing the brain's capacity for learning to function more optimally [61], [62]. This demonstrates that, in rural areas, a humanistic approach through persuasive communication can serve as an alternative solution for improving academic performance without requiring substantial financial resources.

Although positive affirmation proved effective at school, this study reveals a significant challenge in the form of "environmental dissonance." The finding that the majority of students, namely 7 out of 10, did not receive similar support at home indicates a disruption in the educational chain. This suggests that the function of the home as *al-madrasah al-ula* the first school has not yet been aligned with the school in providing *qaulan thayyiban*, or good and constructive speech. As a result, the mental reinforcement developed by teachers often weakens when students return to their family environment [63], [64]. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that learning barriers are often exacerbated by the lack of emotional support from families. In Cisalak Village, parents' educational backgrounds and economic pressures may contribute to the limited use of verbal appreciation at home. Consequently, the self-efficacy that has been carefully developed at school often declines once students return home.

Furthermore, the finding concerning social anxiety caused by peer pressure indicates that positive affirmation cannot be implemented uniformly through a one-size-fits-all approach. Teachers need to possess situational sensitivity, as demonstrated by the teacher participants in this study through a "whispering" or personal approach. This approach reflects the value of *rahmah*, or compassion, in education, in which the teacher acts as a *murabbi* who not only teaches but also protects the feelings and dignity (*izzah*) of students with high levels of social anxiety. This is important to ensure that affirmation does not become a boomerang that causes students to feel alienated from their peer group. Overall, this study confirms that positive affirmation is a powerful yet fragile form of persuasive communication. It requires a supportive ecosystem involving schools, families, and peers so that its impact on students' academic motivation and self-efficacy can be sustained in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that persuasive communication through positive affirmations plays a strategic role in reconstructing students' self-efficacy in Desa Cisalak. This practice is a tangible implementation of Islamic communication through *qaulan thayyiban*, focusing on valuing effort (the process). It has proven effective in changing students' perceptions of failure, validating their self-abilities, and fostering optimism and *tawakal* in facing learning challenges. In this context, positive affirmations serve not just as verbal motivation, but as a mechanism of social persuasion that strengthens students' belief in their ability to grow (growth mindset). However, the study also found that the effectiveness of positive affirmations heavily depends on a holistic environmental ecosystem. The impact of affirmations becomes less optimal due to a dissonance in support

between the school and home environment. The lack of verbal appreciation from parents at home, along with social anxiety due to peer pressure, represents significant external barriers to the internalization of these positive values.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations to consider when interpreting the results. First, it focuses on two elementary schools in Desa Cisalak with 14 informants, making the findings highly contextual and not generalizable to other rural areas. Second, data collection occurred over 40 days during the KKN program from July to August 2024, which may not be enough to observe long-term changes in students' self-efficacy. Additionally, the study focused on verbal communication between teachers and students but did not deeply explore structural factors, such as family economic conditions, that contribute to support gaps at home. Lastly, the descriptive qualitative approach limits the ability to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of the positive affirmation intervention, requiring further experimental or survey-based research for more precise data.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

MB designed the research concept, developed the research framework, and conducted data collection through interviews and observations during the KKN program. He also performed thematic analysis, interpreted the research findings from the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology, and drafted the initial manuscript. PG and MA checked the substance of the research findings and discussion sections and revised the writing standards. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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