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Collaborative Learning and Communication Among Muslim Students at an Islamic University A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

This research aims to assess the communication and collaboration skills of Muslim students, with a specific focus on gender-related, especially, women's perspectives. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative measurements for analyzing students' communication and collaboration skills with qualitative methods, including observations and in-depth interviews, to gain insights into the influence of gender and Islamic understanding on these skills. The study findings revealed that, within the context of Islamic education, women tend to demonstrate stronger verbal communication skills, while men excel in nonverbal communication and collaboration. Essential factors contributing to effective communication and collaboration skills include adherence to communication norms, the use of polite language, and a keen awareness of Islamic social conventions. Additionally, differences in gender roles within Muslim societies were identified as influential in shaping communication patterns and collaboration dynamics. To promote inclusivity and respect for diversity, Islamic higher education institutions should strive to create an environment where both men and women can freely exchange ideas, thoughts, and knowledge without constraints. By advancing gender equality, Islamic higher education can contribute to the development of capable future leaders, uphold Islamic values, and contribute to the establishment of a just and sustainable society.

Keywords: Communication, Collaboration, Gender, State Islamic University

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions, including state Islamic religious universities, bear the responsibility of providing students with the essential skills required to navigate the intricacies of the modern world. Proficient communication skills empower students to express ideas effectively, convey information clearly, and engage in productive interactions with others [1]. Conversely, collaboration skills enable students to collaborate within teams, value diversity, and collectively attain shared objectives [2].

State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) are higher education institutions deeply rooted in the religious and cultural tenets of Islam. While PTKIN provides equal educational opportunities for both men and women, disparities in the comprehension, application, and acceptance of communication and collaboration skills can exist between male and female students. Factors such as gender distinctions, gender stereotypes, and ingrained social roles may influence how students communicate, interact with peers, faculty, and staff, and engage in collaborative endeavors within the PTKIN academic milieu [3]–[5]. Research indicates that within the Muslim community, there are two predominant beliefs concerning gender. Specifically, these beliefs pertain to whether gender should be present in the public sphere or not [6], [7]. Prior research has demonstrated variations in communication styles and collaboration preferences among men and women, underscoring the significance of comprehending how these distinctions manifest within the PTKIN environment.

Table 1. Islamic principles and values in collaboration

Principles	Values
Tauhid (Monotheism)	Tawhid's principle emphasizes the significance of placing shared objectives as a priority, showing reverence for diversity, and preserving unity among team members.
Sincerity	When it comes to collaboration, the principle of Ikhlas serves as a reminder to work with a sincere purpose, which is for the collective welfare rather than purely personal interests.
Justice	This principle underscores the significance of just and equitable treatment of every team member. The value of Adl underscores the importance of affording equal opportunities to all team members, actively considering their viewpoints, and making impartial decisions that serve the common interests.
Consultation	This principle highlights the significance of engaging all team members in the decision-making process. The value of Shura promotes open dialogue, mutual listening, and the respect of every team member's opinions to achieve the optimal consensus.
Cooperation	This principle emphasizes the significance of teamwork and mutual aid in attaining shared objectives. The value of Ta'awun imparts the idea that a thriving team is one where members support each other, exchange knowledge, and collaborate to achieve superior outcomes.
Trust	This principle imparts the significance of firmly holding onto trust and integrity principles during collaboration. The value of Amanah serves as a reminder to preserve trust among fellow team members, honor commitments, and bear responsibility for assigned duties.
Maintaining Good Social Relationships	This principle encourages fostering strong connections within the team. The value of Silaturahmi underscores the significance of nurturing effective communication, showing respect and appreciation for team members, and cultivating positive relationships to establish a harmonious work atmosphere.
Patience	This principle underscores the significance of practicing patience when confronted with challenges and discrepancies during collaboration. Within a collaborative context, the value of Sabar serves as a reminder to maintain composure, handle conflicts with wisdom, and search for optimal solutions.

Previous studies suggest that men tend to display stronger communication abilities and self-confidence [8], Conversely, women tend to have superior listening skills and are more inclined to share their viewpoints [9]. Nevertheless, there has been limited research conducted among PTKIN students on this topic. Moreover, concerning collaborative skills, gender distinctions can be influential as well. Several studies suggest that men are more prone to assume leadership roles and coordinate group assignments, whereas women are more likely to nurture close relationships and promote team cooperation [10]. Nevertheless, just like in the

case of communication skills, there is still a scarcity of research among PTKIN students in this regard.

Hence, this study seeks to evaluate PTKIN students' communication and collaboration skills from a gender perspective. Using group assignments, it will investigate gender-based differences, similarities, and factors affecting group member allocation. Understanding these gender disparities can help PTKIN implement appropriate strategies to enhance student skills. Additionally, findings may benefit other PTKIN institutions in developing inclusive and sustainable programs for improving communication and collaboration abilities.

METHODS

This research uses a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods will be used to statistically measure and analyze the communication and collaboration skills of Muslim students. Qualitative methods will provide in-depth insights into the factors affecting these skills. The study involves physics education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung who are enrolled in the Multimedia Physics Learning course. During six class sessions, students work in groups, utilizing tools like Canva, ChatGPT, and other AI resources to create physics learning materials based on socio-scientific issues.



Figure 1. Academic activities within a collaborative group setting.

The subjects consist of 50 students, including 12 males and 38 females. The researcher applied purposive sampling to select the research participants. Data collection methods include: (1) Questionnaire: The researcher distributed a list of Likert scale statements through Google Forms to assess communication and collaboration skills, as well as the application of Islamic principles in collaborative activities. (2) Structured Interviews: Through interviews, the researcher collected open-ended opinions from students. Topics covered include factors influencing the success of collaboration, how collaborative groups should be formed, the impact of gender diversity and Islamic principles on collaboration methods. (3) Direct Observation Sheets: The researcher observed formal and informal (Café) class activities to understand collaborative activities in both settings. During the observation process, the researcher documented students' activities related to their communication and collaboration for a total of 180 minutes. Data analysis involved three steps: (1) The study utilized Factor Analysis in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16) to observe the percentage differences in each learning style dimension. Data were tabulated using Microsoft Excel 2010, with calculations presented through charts and tables. (2) In-depth interviews were employed to analyze the interview results. This method was chosen as it provides new insights for the researcher on how respondents think and reflect on their learning style preferences. (3) The results from the observation sheets were analyzed using a 'participatory observation' technique,

which had been planned in advance. Observations were systematically recorded according to predetermined learning style variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Results of communication percentage

The assessment tool for communication proficiency is aligned with the Rochester Institute of Technology's criteria and evaluates individuals across four key indicators: oral communication, social maturity, emotional maturity, and intellectual maturity. The results are categorized by gender and are graphically represented in Figure 2, illustrating the outcomes of the communication skills assessment conducted via a questionnaire.

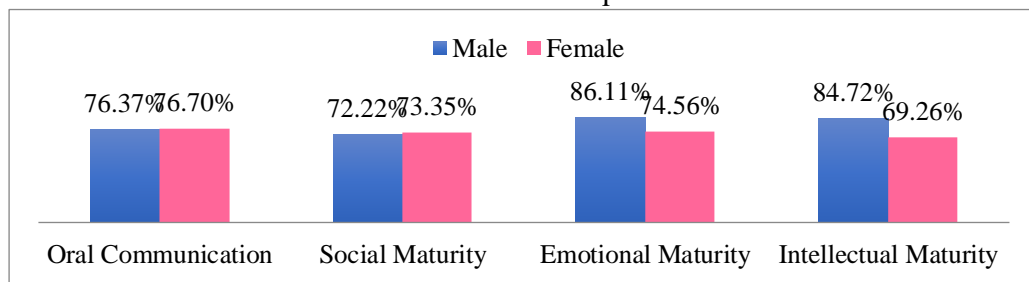


Figure 2. Gender perspectives on communication skills.

Based on Figure 2, there are two communication skill indicators where male and female students show different percentages. In terms of emotional maturity, males score 86.11% while females score 74.56%. For intellectual maturity, males score 84.72%, while females score 69.26%. This indicates that, on an individual basis, males tend to have higher communication skills than females, especially in the areas of emotional maturity and intellectual maturity.

Questionnaire Results of collaboration percentage

The outcomes depict the collaboration skills of PTKIN students with reference to... The results were obtained through a questionnaire, as depicted in Figure 3.

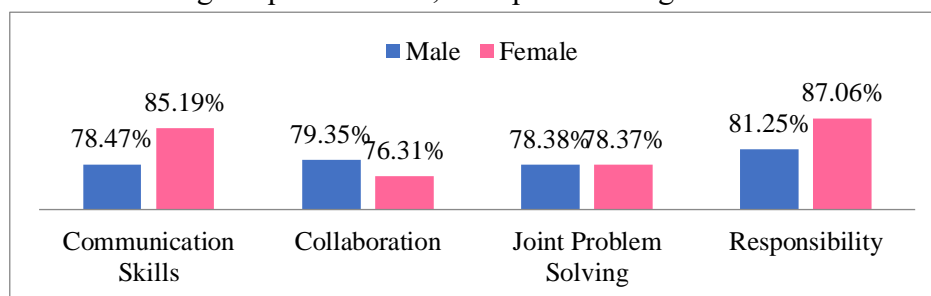


Figure 3. Collaboration skills from a gender perspective.

Based on Figure 3, there are differences in collaboration skills between males and females. Collaboration skills in terms of communication for males are 81.25%, while for females, it's 87.06%. Cooperation for males is at 81.25%, whereas for females, it's 87.06%. Problem-solving together for males is 81.25%, while for females, it's 87.06%. Responsibility for males is 81.25%, and for females, it's 87.06%. These results indicate that females excel in the aspects of ownership/responsibility and communication within groups. Both genders tend to be proficient in collaborative problem-solving, although males exhibit better cooperation skills.

The questionnaire results regarding the application of Islamic principles in collaboration.

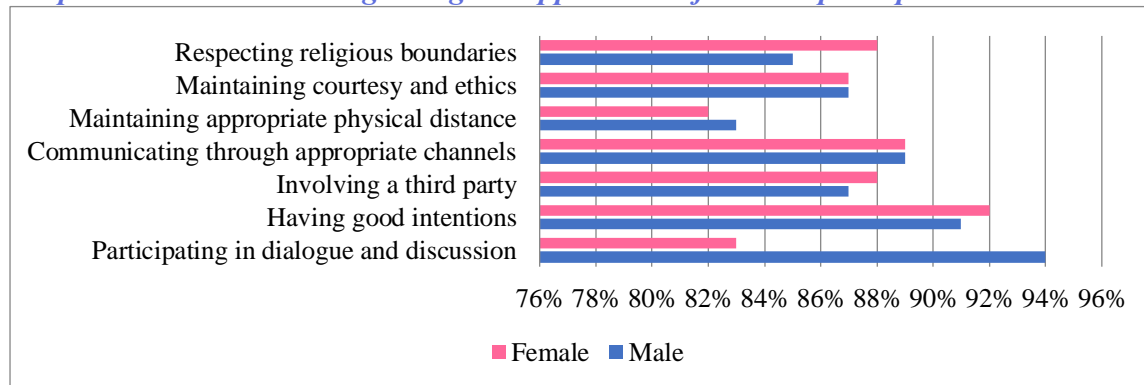


Figure 4. The application of Islamic principles in collaboration.

The graph depicting the respect for religious boundaries reveals that male students exhibit a significantly higher percentage (94%) compared to female students (83%). In terms of maintaining courtesy and ethics, both genders score very high, with females slightly leading by 1% (92% for females and 91% for males). When it comes to maintaining appropriate physical distance, both male and female students perform well, with females showing a marginally higher percentage (88% for females and 87% for males). Both genders are equal in their ability to communicate through appropriate channels, each scoring 89%. Male students slightly exceed female students in involving a third party during interactions, with a score of 83% compared to 82% for females. Both genders exhibit equally good intentions, with an equal score of 87%. Lastly, female students participate in dialogue and discussion slightly more than male students, showing a 3% difference (88% for females and 85% for males).

Overall, the data indicates that both male and female students at the Islamic university demonstrate high levels of respect for religious boundaries, ethics, and proper communication practices. Male students excel in respecting religious boundaries, while female students lead slightly in maintaining courtesy, appropriate physical distance, and participation in dialogues and discussions. Both genders are equally strong in having good intentions and communicating through appropriate channels, reflecting a balanced adherence to these principles across genders.

Interview section

Perspective of respondents on the existence of role differences influenced by gender understanding

Forty-five percent (45%) acknowledge the presence of role differences influenced by specific gender tendencies, which are perceived to have a negative effect on understanding and hinder collaboration. Meanwhile, the remaining 55% believe there are no such differences. Diversity can provide broader insights into how tasks are approached and completed.

Here are some quotes from respondents expressing their views:

Respondent 10: "In discussions, we don't consider gender but focus on the ideas present in our minds and how we can channel them into a group for learning."

Respondent 29: "Everyone should have equal opportunities and be respected, regardless of their gender, when participating and contributing to learning. Gender-based discrimination should not exist."

Respondent 37: "No, within study groups, all members collaborate in seeking and solving a problem under discussion."

Respondent 46: "It doesn't matter; gender differences do not make it difficult for me to learn together."

These responses reflect a range of perspectives on the role of gender in collaboration, with some emphasizing the importance of equal opportunities and respect, while others downplay gender differences in the context of learning and working together.

Differences in how one communicates with peers of the same gender compared to those of the opposite gender in a collaborative learning setting.

Most individuals acknowledge differences in communication when interacting with peers of the same gender compared to those of the opposite gender. These differences may encompass tone of voice, non-offensive language, attitude, and physical contact. It's commonly understood that communicating with the same gender is often easier due to the sense of comfort, feeling understood and heard, and the ability to express feelings and thoughts in a more relaxed manner.

Culture or religion influences how people interact and collaborate.

Most respondents agree that culture and religion undoubtedly influence behavior because they provide deeply ingrained guidance in daily life, which has been instilled since early childhood within families.

Discussion

The findings reveal that gender diversity within a group plays distinct roles, resulting in better collective intelligence, fostering intellectual convergence, and enhancing teamwork. Gender diversity serves as a strong positive predictor of collective intelligence. [11], [12]. In collaboration, women tend to employ a more cooperative and detailed communication style. They are often attuned to body language, facial expressions, and intonation, making them better at reading others' feelings and emotions. This can influence how they listen and respond in interpersonal communication within a group. On the other hand, men tend to lean towards goals and solutions when communicating. They focus on technical aspects and facts in conversations, emphasizing ways to address problems and present concrete solutions. Men often use communication to achieve objectives and demonstrate independence. Women excel in non-verbal communication, showing greater empathy in listening, offering more support, maintaining social relationships within the group, and making efforts to understand others' feelings. Meanwhile, men excel in direct and assertive verbal communication styles, with a focus on solutions and providing advice.

The results of this study indicate that men have higher communication skills than women, especially in the aspects of social maturity and intellectual maturity. Men also demonstrate higher proficiency in non-verbal communication. Emotional maturity refers to one's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions in a healthy and adaptive manner [13]. This involves the ability to recognize one's own emotions and the emotions of others, manage stress, understand and communicate feelings accurately, and address conflicts constructively [14], [15]. On the other hand, intellectual maturity is related to an individual's cognitive development, including the ability to assimilate and process information, apply logical reasoning, think critically, and possess flexible thinking skills [16]. Intellectual maturity also involves the ability to learn from experiences, develop creative thinking skills, communicate effectively, and maintain an open attitude towards lifelong learning.

These findings highlight a gap with the American Psychological Association (APA) report published in 2017, which concluded that there are no fundamental differences in

communication skills between men and women. The APA report emphasized that social and cultural factors such as society-imposed gender roles, gender stereotypes, and social norms can influence an individual's communication skills, but not due to intrinsic differences between men and women. This is also consistent with what was found in this study. It demonstrates that the culture and environment in which respondents are situated still foster strong gender stereotypes, particularly in terms of gender discrimination. Both men and women need determination and a strong commitment, as well as the ability to self-reflect and enhance their emotional intelligence.

Other findings indicate that in terms of collaboration, women have better communication skills than men. Additionally, women exhibit a higher sense of ownership and responsibility in collaborative activities. However, men are more cooperative than women. The most prominent issue in this context is the feeling of restraint that limits women's mobility and makes them feel awkward. In extreme cases, women's freedom of movement in public spaces is restricted, as they are expected to solely manage their families and stay at home [17]. Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained and propagated within the system from childhood to adulthood. Women are labeled with certain roles, and men are assigned specific roles. Gender stereotypes involve generalizations about the roles, attitudes, and characteristics of men and women. For example, the stereotype that men are breadwinners while women are caregivers at home [18]. Women are also often perceived as individuals with weaknesses and limitations, characterized as always emotional and illogical. As a result, women are often considered unsuitable for employment in sectors deemed "difficult," competitive, and rational within the public domain [19], [20]. It's undeniable that we need to be vigilant about the possibility of radical beliefs entering through student organizations.

Extreme ideologies can manipulate religious teachings to justify the oppression or restriction of women [21]. Radical views on certain issues like clothing, employment, or inheritance rights are often employed to restrict women's roles in society. This ideology frequently reinforces conservative gender relations, disregarding equal rights and opportunities for both women and men [22]. This can lead to the constriction of women's roles and potential in various aspects of life, including education, careers, and participation in economic, political, national, and state affairs [23], [24]. Despite the potential for oppression and restriction of women in extremist ideologies, many women actively play a role in countering extremism and engage in prevention and deradicalization efforts. Women's roles in promoting values of tolerance, equality, and peace are crucial in combating radical ideologies. In the Quran, the principle of equality between men and women is mentioned in various aspects of life, including the origin of humanity (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13), religious duties (Surah An-Nisa, 4:1), and social relations (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:189). These verses emphasize the importance of respecting and upholding the equality of rights and dignity between men and women while highlighting the significance of worshipping Allah, maintaining family ties, and interacting within society while upholding Islamic etiquette and ethics.

A balanced understanding of gender refers to a view that recognizes and appreciates the equality, equal rights, and dignity between men and women in various aspects of life [25]. This involves the rejection of gender discrimination and an emphasis on the balance of roles, responsibilities and rights between the sexes. Islam encourages women's active participation in public life and society. This understanding opposes extremist views that tend to limit women's

roles to the domestic sphere, imposing certain obligations on women without giving them equal rights. In countering extremist views, it is important for religious leaders, communities and governments to promote a balanced understanding of gender in Islam [26]. With a proper understanding of Islamic teachings on gender equality and women's rights, it is possible to avoid the spread of extremism and create a more inclusive, just and harmonious environment for all Muslims.

In addition, to reduce the awkwardness in the collaboration of students of the State Islamic University. Harney & Moten, (2013) describe the potential for collaboration that results from informal and relaxed learning environments. They state that "undercommons" such as cafes or other social spaces can create an atmosphere where collaboration between individuals becomes easier, not bound by the constraints of academic formality or rigid hierarchies. In addition, research Beckers et al., (2016) They found that informal collaboration in learning environments such as cafes can significantly contribute to changes in teaching practices and improve student learning outcomes. Our results suggest that a more relaxed and open learning environment, such as group collaboration in a café, can improve interaction between students, increase motivation to learn, and provide a sense of security for students to contribute more actively to discussions and group work. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of collaboration in an environment such as a café can also be influenced by several factors, such as students' desire and willingness to collaborate, the café's supportive governance and facilities, and the nature of the tasks undertaken. In addition, informal collaboration in cafes should still consider norms and ethics/civilization.

The approach in Islamic-based higher education emphasizes the importance of manners, politeness, and respect for others' perspectives and opinions. Therefore, in resolving conflicts and responding to differences in collaborative activities, students who have grown up living with Islamic principles and ethics have their own colors in building interactions, communication and collaboration, including maintaining physical contact, involving a third person (to avoid ihtilat / two-by-two in Islamic teachings is not allowed), paying attention to tone of voice, grammar and observing curfew when work cannot be completed on the same day.

Admittedly, there are difficulties in collaborating with different genders, especially in terms of communication. Women with their emotional feelings are more difficult to talk to when there are differences of opinion and conflicts, throughout the discussion must pay close attention to grammar, men must be more patient in listening and parsing the differences that occur. So the Islamic principle teaches both men and women to have effective communication in a way that women must be straightforward, firm to the point including maintaining the tone of voice in conveying their opinions. in Islam they are recommended not to over talk with men just talk as needed with a tone that is not soft, this helps men understand more easily logically and rationally. men are also encouraged to be more patient listening carefully so that effective communication can be built.

Collaboration with gender diversity can help have a positive impact on individual thinking and problem-solving performance. The success of this collaboration is influenced by an open and accepting attitude, willing to argue, willing to listen, willing to work and be responsible for meeting the expectations of other group members to complete the tasks that have been distributed and respect and appreciate the contribution of each group member.

Collaboration failure can be caused by various factors such as differences in vision and goals [29], lack of commitment [30], communication problems [31], interpersonal conflict [32], and the imbalance of abilities between members [33].

Islamic principles offer guidance to address these issues and foster effective collaboration. Firstly, Islam promotes a shared vision and goal among collaborators, emphasizing sincerity and seeking Allah's pleasure as a unifying factor. Secondly, Islam highlights commitment and responsibility in all tasks, emphasizing trust as a core principle for greater accountability and contribution. Thirdly, Islam encourages honest, clear, and compassionate communication, with values like patient listening and respect for diverse opinions. Fourthly, Islam advises resolving conflicts wisely and peacefully, prioritizing forgiveness, tolerance, and common interests. Lastly, Islam emphasizes recognizing and valuing each member's contributions, fostering unity and productivity. Applying these principles leads to harmonious and productive collaborations, creating a supportive and blessed work environment.

Islamic-based higher education institutions must prioritize the application of ethical and civilized principles in communication and collaboration. Both male and female students should adhere to Islamic values when interacting with others, which entails respecting differing viewpoints, speaking respectfully, avoiding destructive arguments, and fostering understanding through constructive dialogue. This ethical communication promotes an inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere for all individuals. Upholding strong ethics enhances communication and fosters harmonious collaboration among students. Furthermore, Islamic-based higher education promotes equality and inclusion between male and female students, offering equal opportunities for participation in discussions, presentations, and other activities. Students are encouraged to support one another and cultivate a fair and inclusive learning environment.



Figure 5. PTKIN student collaboration element factor

Effective communication and collaboration skills between men and women in Islamic higher education offer benefits not only to individuals but also to society as a whole. By promoting gender equality, Islamic-based higher education can nurture future leaders who uphold Islamic values and contribute to the development of a just and sustainable society. Factors influencing the communication and collaboration skills of Muslim students often involve challenges such as discomfort and reluctance to engage in discussions with the opposite sex during collaborative activities. Addressing these challenges requires a deeper understanding of Islamic principles that encourage cooperation and collaboration to advance civilization while adhering to ethical principles and respectful behavior in public spaces.

CONCLUSION

Islamic principles are deeply ingrained in individual Muslim students and are manifested in their collaborative endeavors. Students with a balanced understanding of gender tend to be more open, accepting, and positive about gender diversity in collaboration. Conversely, those harboring negative biases against specific genders may struggle to actively engage in collaborative activities. Furthermore, to effectively implement Islamic laws and teachings in regulating human life, there is a need for supportive facilities and infrastructure. For instance, creating more open discussion spaces with a relaxed atmosphere can foster creativity and cultivate a cooperative spirit in collaborative activities. The key element in nurturing this willingness is a commitment to upholding ethical communication principles. This includes maintaining a respectful tone, adhering to proper grammar, valuing and appreciating diverse opinions, and being open to accepting differing viewpoints. Additionally, a fair distribution of tasks and a willingness to meet the expectations of fellow group members are crucial. All of this should be complemented by suitable facilities, infrastructure, and a conducive environment.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

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