

Interpersonal Communication Model of Prophet Muhammad SAW

Nasrullah^{1*}, Rachmat Kriantono², Anang Sujoko³

Communication Science Department
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Brawijaya University

Abstract

Communication models emerging and developing recently are still theoretically dominated by western perspective. "Seven Traditions" term previously promoted by Robert Craigh has grown into "Ten Traditions". Other side of this prespective, eastern perspective, is indeed also meaningful in undstanding the review of communication science. Islam perspective represented by Prophet Muhammad SAW constitutes this eastern side. However, eastern perspective is not the object of spotlight in the academic review either in the west or east parts of the world. As a part of the responsibility for the intellectualism, the author feels necessary to adopt the title "**Interpersonal Communication Model of Prophet Muhammad SAW**". The methodology of this review is qualitative. Literature study is used as the approach of review because the observed object is related with the history and also because field study is not reliable approach for the type of qualitative review. Result of the current review shows that communication models introduced by Prophet Muhammad SAW does not escape from the guidance and revelation of Allah SWT stated in Al Qur'an and Hadist. It is expected that interpersonal communication model of Prophet Muhammad SAW should be new paradigm in the review of communication science beyond western perspective that is currently developed.

Keywords: communication, interpersonal, Prophet Muhammad SAW

INTRODUCTION*

If we open the historical sheets of worldwide civilization in the journey of man, as noted [1], it is impossible to understand them without reviewing the remarkable and glorious civilization of Islam [2]. asserted that "Islam is not merely a religion but also an ultimate civilization"[2]. Since its early development in 583 after century (AC), Islam civilization has been successful in transforming people mindset, political manner, law (*syariat*), social structure, and economical order of the world at the time [1].

The most deserving person for building the pillars of the marvelous Islam civilization is Prophet Muhammad SAW. After his veracious struggle, "an isolated tribe in the dessert has successfully arisen into a community that changes the destiny of man history" [3]. According to Armstrong,

"Prophet Muhammad SAW has delivered a great change in the world only in 23 years" [4]. His success key in leading and also developing a noble civilization is supported by communication factor of his personality [5]. "the most important factor behind the success of someone is on the ability of speech or the competence of communication. Great leader is always good communicator" [5].

Building a civilization from zero (from nothing to something) is not easy or nearly impossible to achieve at very short term. There is no one in the earth who can produce it except Prophet Muhammad SAW. For achieving it, supporting factors are needed. One of the most important factors is communication. "almost all changes on the earth root from communication/rhetoric" [6]. Without communication, there would be no change.

Correspondence address:

Nasrullah

Email : nasrullah_annabani@gmail.com

Address : Jln. Untad 1 No. 14. Kel. Tondo. Kec. Mantikulore.
Kota Palu.

Syam [7] stated that “civilization must be communicated (constructed or socialized) by the actors of civilization (communicator)”. Both statements above strictly determine to us that a civilization would not rise without the maturity of strategy, planning, management and communication system. It cannot be denied that all these conditions are found in the personality of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Based on the overview above, it is clear that Prophet Muhammad SAW is a brilliant communicator, possibly beyond the average of man. The concrete proof is that he successfully builds an amazing civilization without blood shed at very short term. It is why Prophet Muhammad SAW must be eligible person for the review of communication science. However, such review receives few attentions among the academicians either in the west countries or even the east. The review on how Prophet Muhammad SAW can build Islam civilization does touching with the discussion of communication aspects, such as communication management, communication strategy, propaganda communication, and others. Surprisingly, many researches only focus on the discussion of interpersonal communication model of Prophet Muhammad SAW. As a result, the author expects that by reviewing interpersonal communication model of Prophet Muhammad SAW, it would provide new perspective in understanding the review of communication science, especially in the context of interpersonal communication.

Pursuant to this background, problem of research is formulated: “How is interpersonal communication model developed by Prophet Muhammad SAW in his preaching to build Islam civilization?”

Theoretical Base

Al Qur’an and Hadist have provided guidances in relation with social-community problems. Number of verses for resolving such problems are more than those explaining *mahdhah* devotion [8]. Being a religion teaching about all living aspects (kaffah), Islam guides all human activities including communication [9]. Only, in both Al Qur’an and Hadist, we hardly find words or definitions of communication and communication science because Al Qur’an

and Hadist do not provide specific exposition about communication [10]. However, according to M.Amir, as mentioned [11], although Islam does not provide specific words or definitions of communication and communication science, but both Al Qur’an and Hadist are the ultimate sources containing with fundamental principles of communication.

Communication in Islam perspective must be based on religiosity, and it refers to Al Qur’an and Hadist. It was said so because any things related with communication process, such as principle, norm, message, information (*matlumat*) and media, should be based on revelation accepted by Prophet Muhammad SAW (Rasulullah SAW) and his Sunnah [12]. Prophet Muhammad SAW himself is the representative of Islam. It is therefore, clear that any things on Prophet Muhammad SAW cannot escape from the guidance of Allah SWT, as declared in Al Qur’an (QS. An-Najm:3-5), “and, the words he speak (Al Qur’an verses) never come out of his desire. His words are only the revelation given to him ...”. It is one attribute constituting the characteristic of interpersonal communication of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Methodology of Review

Methodology used in the review is qualitative descriptive with the approach of literature study because the observed object is related with the history. This fact makes field study becoming unreliable approach, and thus, the only way to proceed the study is through literature study[13]. Some sources of literatures are used, such as: (1) Al Qur’an; (2) As-Sunnah (Hadist); (3) Book of Sirah; (4) Journals; and (5) Books relevant with the review.

Interpersonal communication is a face-to-face communication among people which allows them to capture directly the verbal or non-verbal reactions of others [4]. Therefore, it can be said that developing an interpersonal communication would always need the ability of communicator to build up good relationship with communicant. This factor is very determining for one in keeping the quality and effectiveness of communication. Therefore, it is important to put into attention the relevant aspects to support quality and effectiveness of

communication, starting from the smallest to the biggest one.

If taking this perspective into account, Prophet Muhammad SAW is clearly very good communicator. It is proved by his success in giving a preach (*dakwah*). It would be impossible to preach if he has very bad interpersonal communication with his communicant. That is why it is so important to examine what is kind of interpersonal communication model developed by Prophet Muhammad SAW that makes him successful in achieving his goal.

1. Non-Verbal Communication

Prophet Muhammad SAW is known as a personality of detail. He take personally the smallest matters. It may be trivial among average man but it is very determining factor. It must be noted that communicant always uses senses during communication, among others eyes, ears, and nose for visual, audio and scent stimulants. All three sensing instruments are quite functional in communication activity and very important for communicant. These instruments also influence quality and effectiveness of communication. Thus, the communicator must take these factors into consideration during communication in order to develop good interaction relationship between communicator and communicant.

The author attempts to review the personal characteristic of Prophet Muhammad SAW. He is very attentive to the smallest matters that support communication activity. We may find them trivial but Prophet Muhammad SAW can consider them as very determining item. Such matters are explained as following.

a. Maintaining cleanliness and tidiness.

Prophet Muhammad SAW is a person with high level of attention to the matters of cleanliness and tidiness, starting from the hair tip to the toe. Communicator must be as attractive as possible because communicant would use their sensing instruments to comprehend situations and conditions around them, including communicator. In this case, Prophet Muhammad SAW is very cautious in maintaining his self-presence, at least keeping his colleagues into amazement. This magnificent self-fashion has been told in several stories.

It was told by Abdullah bin Al-Harits RA who said, "I never saw Rasulullah SAW wearing the best cloth instead of his red cloth". (HR Bukhari & Muslim)

It was heard from Anas who said that "Rasulullah SAW uses hair oil and keeps his beard tidy". (HR. At- Tirmidzi)

It was said by Aisyah RA that "Rasulullah SAW uses hair oil made from the leaf of henna (*pacar*) tree as main constituent mixed with the blend of other plants, and he speaks, 'Change (color) your hair because Jews never change (do) it'. (HR, Al-Bazzar dan Al-Hindi)

It was declared by Aisyah RA that "there are seven items never left behind by Rasulullah SAW either during his journey or when he occupies his residence. These items are two bottles of oil (hair oil and perfume), hair comb, mirror, eye shadow pencil, tooth brush (*siwak*), and beard comb". (Told in the book of Al-Ilal Al-Mutanahiyah).

Rasulullah SAW also prevents him from releasing unpleasant odors, either those from scent of body (sweats and armpit), mouth and cloth. Indeed communicant uses their smelling sense during communication and it is potentially sensitive when communicator and communicant have very close distance during the talk. Rasulullah SAW is highly attentive to this factor and he uses herbal lotion (*lulur*) during taking the shower to control his body scent.

Ummu Salamah told that "Rasulullah SAW protects his genital while using lotion". (HR Tirmidzi & Ahmad)

It was also confirmed by Anas who said, "Rasulullah SAW is the most fragrant person, and I do not smell more fragrant misk and perfume than the fragrance of Rasulullah SAW". (HR. Ibnu Abi Syaibah & Ath Thabrani).

For restraining the smell of the mouth, Rasulullah SAW cleans his mouth regularly:

It was told by Amir bin Rubaiah who declared, "I see Rasulullah SAW using his siwak many times and countless although he do fasting at time". (As told by Ahmad, Abu Daud, & Tirmidzi).

Rasulullah SAW avoids foods with strong aroma.

Jabir bin Samurah informed, "When Rasulullah SAW ate, the rest was given to Abu Ayyub. One day, Rasulullah SAW was given a bowl of meal with white onion flavor. He directed the meal to Abu Ayyub who was then asking anxiously, "Your Honor Rasulullah! Is it forbidden to consume white onion?" His answer was "No, it is not, but I do not like the smell". "Then, I would dislike anything you dislike", Abu Ayyub asserted. (HR. Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, & At-Tirmidzi)

Imagine if communicant observes or smells unpleasant aroma on communicator which may lead to nasty feeling. It surely damages communication activity into less effective one, and messages delivered by communicator would be less optimally absorbed by communicant.

a. Integrity (*akhlaq*)

Besides the factor of cleanliness and tidiness, the successful preaching of Prophet Muhammad SAW is also influenced by his integrity. The author believes that integrity is a form of non-verbal communication to communicant, and it is also an important early capital for the communicator before they develop communication. Communicant is also human and they assess communicator from their words and acts. We are the social creature living in a community and we must interact with other members of community. People around us, therefore, would easily see and perceive our attitude and morality.

In daily life, Prophet Muhammad SAW has been known as having marvelous personality. Many stories confirm about this fact. Even Allah SWT provides him with a compliment as stated in Al Qur'an, Epistle Al-Qalam (68:4): "And truly you have a noble character". Indeed, before inaugurated as the Prophet, the young Muhammad was given by his community a title "Al-Aamiin", meaning "man of trustworthy".

The personality of Muhammad is undeniably good. The title of "man of trustworthy" is not given to merely man without special personality. It is not asked by Muhammad but the community insist on giving it to him. Why? Fast answer is that the community have observed directly the personality of Muhammad and perceived that he deserves the title. It can be said from

now on that integrity and good personality are non-verbal form of communication. Someone's behavior which produces good impression on the other is the example of this communication form.

Integrity is the early capital of Prophet Muhammad SAW in performing his individual preach. People around him, including families and friends, absolutely acknowledge his integrity and personality. As a result, they easily accept the persuasion done by Prophet Muhammad SAW. Can you imagine if the Prophet has bad personality? People surely deny every invitation made by the Prophet. That is why Islam always emphasizes that every human should have good integrity.

"Those among you who are the most beloved, and those who sit nearest by me in the Judgment Day, are those with the best integrity". (HR. Tirmidzi No. 2018. Syaikh Al Albani said that this Hadist is legal (*shahih*)).

We can measure the integrity of Rasulullah SAW by understanding Al Qur'an and Hadist. It was perceived that Rasulullah SAW is the representation of both, and we can follow his representation.

Ummul Mukminin 'Aisyah Radhiyallahu 'Anha was ever asked by Hisyam bin Amir Radhiyallahu 'Anhu about the integrity of Rasulullah SAW. Aisyah answered by asking, "You are reading Al Qur'an, aren't you?" Hisyam said, "Yes, I am". Aisyah continued, "the integrity of Rasulullah SAW is Al Qur'an". (H.R. Muslim).

b. Convenient face shape and delighted to give smile

"Do not underestimate small kindness eventhough it is only putting alight face when one of you meets your relatives". (HR. Muslim no. 2626).

"You cannot persuade human's heart with your wealth. But you can convince them with alight face and noble integrity" (HR. Al Hakim).

2. Verbal Communication

In addition to vision and smelling senses, communicant also has a listening sense. This sense is used to listen every voice intonation, sentence structure, and message content, and also useful in understanding the meanings contained within the speech of

communicator. Rasulallah SAW also gives special attention to the following manners:

a. Delighted to give greeting

Rasulallah SAW is very delightful to give greeting because this activity is the entry gate to create a dialog.

May I show you the thing that makes you in love to each other? His believer friends answered, "Surely yes, Your Honor Rasulallah". The Prophet said, "Spread the greeting among you". (HR. Muslim no.54)

b. Proper sentence structure

In doing a communication, Rasulallah SAW is very attentive to sentence structure. The sentence must be brief, compact, clear, suitable with the issue, easily understood, and without long-winded words. The reverse of this structure may risk from causing boredom to the communicant.

"The sentences said by Rasulallah SAW have different structure from your words. He speaks in clear words which are easily understood by anyone listening him." (H.R. At-Turmuzdi, no 3639)

Aisyah asserted, "Rasulallah SAW never speaks fast or in long-winded words. Different from you, he speaks slow but clear, and thus, the listener can memorize what they have heard". (HR, At Tirmidzi & Ibn Sa'ad)

The example of brief, compact and clear words can be seen from the dialog between Rasulallah SAW and Utbah bin Rabi'ah.

Utbah once came to visit Rasulallah SAW on behalf of Quraisy leaders to make a dialog. The essence of the dialog is that Rasulallah SAW would be given with wealth, position, woman and any luxurious facilities of life in exchange for stopping his preach. After Utbah explains this offers, the Prophet only asked, "Do you finish your words Abu Walid (Utbah nickname)?" Utbah answered, "Yes, I do". The Prophet only said, "Good then", and he pronounced *Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim* and recited Al-Qur'an Epistle Fushilat (41:1-5). He continues the recitation with Epistle Sajadah and after finishing it, he performs a bow (*sujud*). Rasulallah SAW said, "After you hear what you want to hear, do you insist with your offer?" [14].

Other verse in Al Qur'an has confirmed this importance of proper sentence structure:

"..... tell them with Qaulan Maysura (easy words)" (QS. Al-Isra: 28).

3. Rich of meanings

Speaking with brief, compact, and clear words does not mean without meanings. The words must rich of meanings.

"I have been given six privileges over the other Prophets, and the first was the ability to convey brief words but rich of meanings". (HR. Muslim)

The fact above can be confirmed by other Hadist. Certain Hadist describes the moment when Rasulallah SAW gives a message through meaningfully brief words.

A believer (*mukmin*) would not be stung by snake from same hole twice. (HR. Al-Quda'i)

4. Communicating fluently

Rasulallah SAW speaks fluently. This ability was confirmed by wives, friends and people who live around him. It was told that this fluency was acquired through practice. Other person can have it, especially when the person works as public speaker. The following story tells about it.

Umar bin Khatthab once asked directly to Rasulallah SAW. "Your Honor Rasulallah, what makes you becoming more fluent than us while you rarely go far away from us?" Rasulallah SAW answered, "I was taught by Jibril and I memorize the lesson beyond my head". (HR. As-Suyuthi & Al-Hindi)

It becomes a norm for the public speaker to have a competence of building a proper sentence structure. This competence can be sharpened with practice and habituating. Therefore, the keyword of the norm is learning and practice.

5. Giving parables to facilitate the understanding of words

Rasulallah SAW always gives parables or figures of speech to facilitate the listener to understand his words, at least by giving emphasis to the main content.

It was told by Abu Hurairah RA that he heard Rasulallah SAW said, "Imagine that there is a river passing in front of the house of one among you. He takes a bath

five times in this river. Do you think there is still a dirt on his body? The believer friends answered, "Of course, no more dirt on his body". Rasulullah SAW asserted, "Allah SWT cleans our sins through our prayer five times a day". (HR. Bukhari Muslim)

The message above implies strong impression due to the effect of parable used by Rasulullah SAW. It has a stronger effect than merely urging his friends to do prayer (*sholat*) five times a day. The goal of the parable is indeed to emphasize the requirement of prayer five times a day. Rather than going directly into the point, he uses the parable because he is worrying with some friends who may dislike prayer invitation. The Hadist also showed that the parable is used by Rasulullah SAW to send motivation message to the friends about the benefit of prayer. Thus, the parable with motivation tones should be useful in delivering important message.

6. Voice Intonation

While speaking, Rasulullah SAW expressed his voice through gently intonation. It successfully keeps the listener away from feeling offended.

"And lower your voice. The ugliest voice is the voice of donkey". (QS. Luqman. 31: 19).

"Talks to him both of you with gently words, and hopefully, he would remember or even be afraid". (Thaaha. 20:44).

7. Message Content

Every communication cannot be separated from message content. This factor is very sensitive because it may subject others to feel offended, hurt, sad, and others, or just to experience the reverse. Besides having the sensing instruments, communicant also has mindset and feeling, and communicator must take them into consideration. Rasulullah SAW attended this attribute and he spoke in the words far away from reproach, curse, contempt, mockery, falsehood and others.

"A believer is not a person of *tha'an*, cursing, or easily expressing contemptible dirty words". (HR. Bukhari)

"God dislikes bad words expressed directly and honestly except those said by ill treated persons. God is All Listening and All Knowing". (Epistle An-Nisa, Verse 148).

"Those believing God and Judgment Day should say only good words or just remain silent". (HR Bukhari dan Muslim).

".....keep away from using lie words." (QS Al-Hajj: 30).

".....Therefore, they should fear (*takwa*) to God and say only the truth." (An-Nisaa'. 4:9).

".....Give them their livelihood and cloth (from their wealth), and talk to them with good words". (An-Nisaa'. 4:5).

"Alas the believers, do not let a certain group mocking the other (because)..... ". (Al-Hujurat: 11).

"Cursing a believer is equaled to killing." (HR. Bukhari).

"There are three signs of hypocrite: if they talk, they lie; if they give promise, they do not keep it; and if they have duty, they betray." (HR. Bukhari)

Message contents, either good or bad, may influence the thought, feeling and psychology of communicant. If communicant hears unpleasant words from communicator, they prefer to stand away from communicator, find difficulty to build good relationship with communicator, and even show less respect to any messages conveyed by communicator, which could reduce the effectiveness of communication. The message delivered by Rasulullah SAW is always far from the contents that may trigger dispute.

8. Understanding Situations and Conditions of Communicant

When having a dialog with others, Rasulullah SAW put into his consideration the situations and conditions of his communicant. For instance, he attempts to match with the level of knowledge or intellectualism of communicant, and thus, the words he delivers would be easily understood. If we do a communication only for platitude to make people considering us as sophisticated and scientific, the question arises, "do you think people can understand what you have delivered?" Indeed, we cannot speak to low educated person in manner when we speak to professor.

“Speak to human based on their intellectual capacity”. (H.R. Muslim)

“We would not send a Prophet unless he can explain the revelation with his community’s language”. (QS.Ibrahim:4).

9. Not Discriminating Communicant Status

Rasulullah SAW never dicriminates human (communicant) because he appreciates anyone he encounters. He also never lets bad words coming out from his mouth to humiliate the poor. Among his believer friends are the rich, the poor, the nobility, the slave, and the common person from middle class. He treat them similar without different at all. Al Qur’an has underlined the importance of non-discriminating treatment. When Rasulullah SAW was busy talking with Quraisy nobilities who want to embrace Islam, the blind came before him. Rasulullah SAW felt an awkward with this blind, and the verses descended:

He (Muhammad) made a wry face and turned because it came before him the blind. Do you know may be he want to clean himself (from sins), or (want) to get some lessons which may benefit him? To people with adequacy, you serve them. There is no reproach upon you if the blind does not clean himself (becoming believer). (QS. Abasa. 80:1-8).

10. When Rasulullah SAW Stands as Communicant

Rasulullah SAW has ever been positioned as communicant. He is very cautious and critical in receiving the information.

Alas the believers, if it comes before you the atheist bringing a story, then do a careful check to it to avoid you from making disaster against a society without you know the cause which then making you regret for what you have done. (QS Al-Hujurat 49: 6)

Rasulullah SAW arranges his posture into face-to-face with other when he talks to other as communicator or listens to other as communicant. This position is a form of appreciation to the people. Based on this norm, we may understand then interpersonal communication model of Rasulullah SAW when he performs his preach and we also can acknowledge his behavioral aspects (integerity), especially when he

builds a relationship. We also takes lessons from voice intonation and message content as the issues highly attended by him.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be said that Islam has a set of rules regulating issues of communication and these rules are given in very clear words and details. Interpersonal communication model in Islam that is represented by Prophet Muhammad SAW is still submissive to the revelation of Allah SWT which has been stated in Al Qur’an and Hadist. Prophet Muhammad SAW is the ideal model of interpersonal communication concerning with his presentation of non-verbal and verbal communication, message content, voice intonation and also his position as communicant. The communication under Islam perspective, therefore, is reliable to be used as new perspective in understanding the review of communication science.

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