



The Effectiveness of Symbolic Modeling Technique to Increase Empathy of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember Mahasantri

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Abstract

The Effectiveness of Symbolic Modeling Technique to Increase Empathy of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember Mahasantri. This study aims to test the effectiveness of symbolic modeling techniques in increasing empathy among students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember. The background of this study is based on the low level of empathy shown by some students in the social life of the Islamic boarding school. The study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one group pre-test and post-test design method. The sample consisted of 7 students with low empathy levels selected through a purposive sampling technique. The data collection instrument was an empathy scale questionnaire, and data analysis was carried out using the Wilcoxon test. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test empathy scores with a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that the symbolic modeling technique is effective in increasing empathy among students. The implication of this study is the importance of implementing symbolic modeling techniques in guidance and counseling services, especially in religious education environments to shape social and moral character. Researchers recommend the continued use of this technique by counselors or Islamic boarding school administrators, as well as the development of further research with broader subjects and techniques to strengthen the understanding and application of empathy-enhancing methods among the younger generation.

Keywords: Modeling Techniques; Symbolic Modeling; Empathy.

A. Introduction

Empathy is a crucial social skill for building healthy and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Bastomi, 2020), particularly in the context of communal life in Islamic boarding schools. As social beings, humans are required to understand, feel, and respond appropriately to the emotions of others (Bastomi, 2021). In education, particularly religious education, empathy is fundamental to character development, including tolerance, caring, and solidarity (Zuchdi, 2003; Setiawati & Mahesa, 2022). However, developments and the influence of globalization have eroded the social sensitivity of the younger generation, including Islamic boarding school students.

The phenomenon of decreased empathy was also identified among students at the Ibnu Katsir Putri Islamic Boarding School in Jember. Observations showed that most students exhibited apathy, minimal social initiative, and were less responsive to issues around them. Students tended to be indifferent to the condition of sick friends, avoided collective responsibility, and were less active in deliberation activities. This condition indicates a moral crisis and social sensitivity, which, according to Zarary (2023), is also a common symptom among Generation Z, who have 40% lower levels of empathy than previous generations.

Counseling approaches in Islamic boarding schools face unique challenges that differ from those in general educational contexts, as they are closely linked to religious value systems, strong authority structures, and a pesantren culture that emphasizes obedience, role models, and good manners toward others. In this context, the effectiveness of counseling techniques depends heavily on the method's alignment with sharia principles and sensitivity to the pesantren's collective norms (Su'eb, 2019). Symbolic

modeling techniques, while proven effective in enhancing empathy through visual media, must be adapted to Islamic values and local culture to avoid resistance or being perceived as contradictory to pesantren etiquette. For example, the selection of video content must consider the role models of the characters, the limits of modesty (*awrah*), and the narrative that adheres to Islamic morals. Another challenge is how this technique will be accepted by students accustomed to traditional learning methods such as *talaqqi* (religious study) or religious book recitation. Therefore, the application of symbolic modeling in counseling in Islamic boarding schools requires innovation that is not only pedagogical, but also contextual and cultural, in order to convey a profoundly empathetic message without neglecting the values upheld in the Islamic education system (Rahmah et al., 2024).

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of techniques such as role-playing (Puspita et al., 2020) and psychodrama (Cahyani, 2019) in increasing student empathy. However, few studies have specifically explored the effectiveness of symbolic modeling techniques, particularly in university-based Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This technique utilizes videos or displays of positive behavior that can be imitated and is effective in shaping prosocial behavior through symbolic observation (Bandura in Erford, 2020).

The urgency of this research rests on the need for an approach that aligns with the characteristics of the digital generation of Islamic boarding school students, who more readily absorb messages through visual and symbolic media. Symbolic modeling allows individuals to internalize empathetic behavior without direct experience, but rather through identification with characters or situations in the media. This approach aligns with the developmental phase of late adolescence, where students tend to imitate models they deem relevant (Fatmawati, 2017).

Therefore, this research is important to fill the gap in the literature regarding the application of symbolic modeling among Islamic boarding school

students and to contribute to guidance and counseling practices in Islamic boarding schools. This research is expected to serve as a reference for counselors, female religious teachers, and Islamic boarding school administrators in implementing intervention techniques that are contextual, effective, and appropriate to the socio-emotional challenges of today's young generation (Johan et al., 2020; Liza, 2020)..

B. Method

According to Sugiyono (2016), the experimental method is a quantitative research method used to determine the effect of the independent variable (treatment) on the dependent variable (outcome). In this study, the researcher used a quantitative method, and the type of research used in this study was a pre-experiment with a one-group pre-test-post-test design. Sugiyono (2016) stated that this design can be illustrated as follows:

Tabel 1
Desain Penelitian

Kelompok	Pre-test	Perlakuan	Post-test
Eksperimen	O ₁	X	O ₂

Keterangan :

O₁ : Pemberian *pre-test* (tes awal, sebelum diberi perlakuan).

X : Pemberian *treatment* menerapkan dengan teknik modeling.

O₂ : Nilai *post-test* (tes akhir, setelah diberikan perlakuan).

The study population was all 44 female students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Jember, consisting of the 2021-2023 intake. The sample used in this study was a purposive sampling area method, a sampling technique based on various considerations (Sugiyono, 2016). This consideration was made because most students have low empathy. The study sample consisted of 7 students.

In this study, the researcher used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design of one group pre-test and post-test design. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique, namely a sampling

technique based on specific considerations. The main consideration used was the low level of empathy among students, as identified through the results of initial observations and filling out the empathy scale pre-test questionnaire. Of the total of 44 students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember, 7 students were selected as research subjects because they met the criteria as students with empathy scores in the low category (range of 101–150). The subjects of this study were students from the 2021 intake who were active in Islamic boarding school activities.

Data collection techniques can be conducted using observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2016). Researchers use questionnaires with a Likert scale, which is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of an individual or group of people regarding social phenomena (Sudaryana & Agusiady, 2022). In other words, to facilitate the data collection process, researchers use a Likert scale, which can be used to measure attitudes and opinions.

The intervention implementation steps began with filling out a pre-test questionnaire to measure initial empathy levels. After that, the researcher provided an intervention using symbolic modeling techniques for four sessions. Each session featured a video or symbolic display depicting empathetic behavior, such as helping a friend in difficulty or showing social concern. After the video screening, a reflective discussion was held to encourage understanding and internalization of empathetic behavior. Next, the students were encouraged to apply the values of empathy in their daily lives within the Islamic boarding school environment. After the intervention was completed, the students again filled out the same questionnaire for the post-test to measure changes in empathy levels. Data analysis was performed using the Wilcoxon test to determine significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores with non-parametric analysis techniques using SPSS 25.00. The basis for decision-making in the Wilcoxon test is as follows:

- a. If the sig. value (2-tailed) < 0.05 then there is a significant difference (hypothesis accepted)
- b. If the sig. (2-tailed) value > 0.05 then there is no difference in the average of the data tested.

C. Discussion

1. Results

Pretest data was collected to identify students with low empathy. Prior to administering the treatment using symbolic modeling techniques, the students who would be used as research samples were asked to complete a questionnaire to identify the research subjects. The results of the pretest can be analyzed using the following data:

Table 2
Empathy Pre-Test Results for the Class of 2021

No	Respondent Name	Amount	Category
		Score	
1	LN	50	R
2	FIRE	58	R
3	KJ	58	R
4	NO	61	R
5	HO	65	R
6	HE	69	R
7	DF	87	R
8	AP	172	S
9	RN	183	S
10	SS	198	S
11	NT	199	S
12	NY	237	T
13	MM	204	T
14	SI	225	T
15	MR	240	T

Table 3
Pre-Test Results Presentation

No.	Value Range	CRITERIA	NUMBER OF
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			STUDENTS
1	101-150	Low empathy	7
2	151-200	Moderate empathy	4
3	201-250	High empathy	4
Total			15

Based on these results, researchers will administer treatment using symbolic modeling techniques to seven students with low empathy scores. The following is the analysis:

Table 4

Data on Students from the Class of 2021 with Low Empathy Levels

No	Respondent Name	Score	Category
1.	LN	80	R
2.	FIRE	88	R
3.	KJ	78	R
4.	NO	71	R
5.	HO	75	R
6.	HE	89	R
7.	DF	97	R
	Average	83	

A post-test was then administered to a sample of students. This was intended to assess any improvement in students' empathy before and after the treatment. The post-test results illustrated the improvement in students' empathy after the treatment, as follows:

Table 5

Post-Test Results of the Empathy of the 2021 Student Class

No	Respondent Name	Score	Category
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1.	LN	225	T
2.	FIRE	230	T
3.	KJ	220	T
4.	NO	202	T
5.	HO	210	T
6.	HE	241	T
7.	DF	246	T
	Average	225	

The post-test results showed that the empathy levels of the seven students sampled increased after undergoing treatment. To assess the effectiveness of the symbolic modeling technique in increasing empathy among students at the Ibnu Katsir Islamic Boarding School, the difference between the pre-test and post-test can be observed in the following table:

Table 6
Results of the 2021 Student Class Empathy Pre-Test and Post-Test

No.	Name	Pre-Test	Capti on	Post-Test	Captio n	Difference
1.	LN	80	R	225	T	+145
2.	FIRE	88	R	230	T	+142
3.	KJ	78	R	220	T	+142
4.	NO	71	R	202	T	+131
5.	HO	75	R	210	T	+135
6.	HE	89	R	241	T	+152
7.	DF	97	R	246	T	+149
	Average	83		225		142

Based on the results above, it is known that seven students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember experienced an increase in empathy. Students with low levels were then given treatment up to four times, and the post-test results showed that each student with low empathy experienced an increase from a moderate level to a high level. The average score from the pre-test was 83 and from the post-test after the last treatment was 225, so the difference between the two was 142.

Based on the researchers' calculations, there was an increase in the average scores in the pre-test and post-test. This means there was an increase in empathy among the students after the symbolic modeling treatment. The following are the results of the Wilcoxon test.

Tabel 7
Hasil Uji Wilcoxon Ranks

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
posttest - pretest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	0,00	0,00
	Positive Ranks	7 ^b	4,00	28,00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	7		

- a. posttest < pretest
- b. posttest > pretest
- c. posttest = pretest

Tabel 8
Test Statistics

Test Statistics ^a	
	posttest - pretest
Z	-2.371 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,018

- a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
- b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on the data, the sig. (2-tailed) is 0.018 and below the standard of 0.05, meaning that there is a significant difference in the empathy level of students at PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember for the pre-test and post-test (hypothesis accepted). Based on the data, the conclusion of the study is that the symbolic modeling technique is effective in increasing the empathy of students at PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember.

2. Discussion

This research is conceptually aligned with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which states that individuals can learn behavior through observing models (observational learning), either directly (live modeling) or indirectly through symbolic media such as videos or films (symbolic modeling) (Bandura in Erford, 2020). In this context, symbolic modeling is an effective means of shaping and modifying social behavior, including empathy, because participants can absorb prosocial values through concrete visualizations of empathetic behavior. This technique not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also involves affective aspects that facilitate the internalization of values and emotional responses.

This research is also supported by previous studies, such as those conducted by Johan, Nurhadi, and Aisyah (2020), which showed that the application of modeling techniques in group guidance services significantly increased student empathy. Similarly, Liza (2020) found that modeling strategies were significantly effective in increasing students' empathy towards peers. Both studies demonstrate that modeling techniques, including their symbolic forms, have the power to shape empathetic behavior through the mechanisms of identification and imitation of the models presented. This research expands the scope of application of these techniques to the context of student-centered Islamic boarding schools, which has not been explored in depth in previous literature.

In addition, the results of this study are in line with the study by Puspita, Mulawarman, and Awalya (2020), which found that role playing—which is also included in learning techniques through social experiences—effective in fostering empathy and responsibility in students. This means that techniques that allow subjects to explicitly experience or observe empathetic behavior have been shown to increase social sensitivity. Therefore, this study provides practical and theoretical contributions by demonstrating that symbolic modeling techniques can be adapted in Islamic boarding school-based religious environments to enhance

the empathetic character of students, while simultaneously enriching the approach to contextual and innovative Islamic guidance and counseling services.

This study highlights the innovation of symbolic modeling techniques as a new contribution to the development of empathy in Islamic boarding school students by presenting visual media in the form of video displays that represent empathetic behavior in real-life contexts. Different from conventional modeling techniques that rely on direct observation of characters or facilitators, symbolic modeling techniques enable a more effective internalization of empathy values through emotional identification with characters in the show, without direct social pressure. This innovation is relevant to the characteristics of the digital generation who are more responsive to visual and symbolic stimulation, and offers an alternative solution for religious educational institutions to convey social values in a contextual and engaging manner. Thus, this technique not only enriches methods in guidance and counseling services but also contributes to the development of empathy intervention models that are adaptive to the challenges of the times.

D. Conclusion

The conclusion of the study is that the symbolic modeling technique has a positive impact on fostering empathy among students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember. The modeling technique was implemented in 4 sessions. After the test was implemented, the average pre-test score was 83 and the post-test score was 225. And from the results of the significance test of the application of the symbolic modeling technique in the study using the Wilcoxon test using SPSS 25.00, the symbolic modeling technique was significantly effective in increasing the empathy of students. Based on the sig. value (2-tailed) of 0.018, it shows a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. So the research hypothesis can be accepted and it can be concluded that the symbolic modeling technique is effective in increasing the empathy of students of PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember.

The implications of this research suggest that symbolic modeling techniques can be used as an effective strategy in guidance and counseling services

to enhance empathy among students, particularly in university-based Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) that face social and emotional challenges due to their busy schedules and diverse individual backgrounds. Through a visual and symbolic approach, students can more easily internalize the values of empathy in a deep and reflective manner.

It is hoped that future researchers can expand the variables and research subjects and can try to use or combine other modeling techniques. For BK teachers, it is hoped that this research can be used as a guide to improve guidance and counseling services, and can make a positive contribution to increasing empathy among students at PPA Ibnu Katsir Putri Jember. It is recommended that counseling practitioners in Islamic boarding schools integrate symbolic modeling techniques into guidance services creatively and contextually, by choosing media that are in accordance with Islamic values and the culture of students.

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