

Dynamics of Interpersonal Communication in Student Organizations: A Phenomenological Study of the Muhammadiyah Student Association in Samarinda City

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ABSTRACT

Trust is essential for sustaining student organizations and is influenced by the quality of interpersonal communication. However, limited research has examined how trust is experienced and formed through interpersonal communication within student organizations, particularly in the Indonesian context. This study addresses this gap by examining the lived experiences of IMM members in Samarinda and the communication processes underlying trust formation. This study aimed to explore members' lived experiences of interpersonal communication in fostering mutual trust. A qualitative study using a transcendental phenomenological approach was conducted with ten purposively selected participants, including active members, alumni, and the IMM Samarinda chairman. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and analysed using Moustakas' phenomenological analysis with NVivo support. Credibility was ensured through source and technique triangulation and member checking. The findings revealed seven themes: communication as the foundation of trust, gradual self-disclosure, interpersonal needs, supportive leadership, informal communication, communication barriers, and the greater effectiveness of face-to-face communication than digital interaction. The distinctiveness of this study lies in integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes to explain how interpersonal communication fosters trust in a student organization. The study concludes that trust develops through continuous interaction, self-disclosure, shared experiences, and a supportive communication climate.

Keywords: interpersonal communication; phenomenology; student organizations; Samarinda; trust

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INTRODUCTION

The success of an organization, whether for-profit or non-profit, is determined not only by the clarity of its vision and mission but also by the quality of interaction and communication among its members. An organization needs harmonious internal relationships as a foundation for effective leadership and the implementation of work programs.

Strong interpersonal relationships allow for a supportive, open, and respectful atmosphere, which ultimately results in the growth of mutual trust (Teguh Rukmana & Santi, 2025). Trust is a key pillar in maintaining group cohesion, strengthening solidarity, and increasing work effectiveness within an organization (Suherman, 2025). Trust in an organization is not something that is formed instantly, but rather is the result of a long process involving interaction, communication, and shared experiences (Utaminingsih, 2014). Openness, honesty, and empathy are the main prerequisites for building trust between individuals, both among fellow employees and between leaders and members of the organization (R. Maulana, D. Jupriono, 2023). On the other hand, failure to build healthy communication can lead to misunderstandings, internal conflict, and reduced member loyalty to the organization.

Interpersonal trust depends not only on an individual's tendency to trust others, but also on an assessment of the other party's trustworthiness, such as ability, reliability, and integrity (Salsabila & Chaerani, 2021). Thus, building trust through interpersonal communication is a fundamental prerequisite for creating effective and meaningful relationships in organizations.

As a center of higher education in East Kalimantan, Samarinda City has become a locus for the development of various extra-campus student organizations as an arena for developing students' intellectual, spiritual, and social capacities. Several organizations are listed, such as the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI), the Indonesian Christian Student Movement (GMKI), the Indonesian National Student Movement (GMNI), and the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM). One extra-campus student organization that continues to grow alongside the development of Muhammadiyah University in Samarinda City is IMM.

Initial observations at IMM Samarinda City reveal that several members struggle to establish effective interpersonal relationships. Unheard opinions during discussions foster mutual suspicion, exposing a critical communication gap that erodes organizational trust. In a cadre-based student organization, mutual trust is vital for maintaining stability and ensuring long-term sustainability.

While previous studies linked interpersonal communication to friendship quality (Salsabila & Chaerani, 2021), in the Communication Science study program students at UIN Suska Riau, there is a role of interpersonal communication in friendships during college (Diniraisa, 2025), and there is a significant relationship between the effectiveness of interpersonal communication and group cohesiveness in the UIN Ar-Raniry student organization (Amirulhaq, 2021), few have investigated its role in resolving interpersonal tension to build trust. Therefore, this study explores how interpersonal communication fosters

trust among members of IMM Samarinda City, bridging the theoretical gap in cadre-based organizational dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between two or more people, either directly or through communication media, with the aim of creating shared meaning, building relationships, and achieving shared goals. Unlike mass communication, interpersonal communication is characterized by two-way interaction, direct feedback, and the involvement of both verbal and nonverbal aspects that enable individuals to understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of their interlocutors. In organizations, interpersonal communication is the primary mechanism for building coordination, resolving conflicts, enhancing cooperation, and strengthening social relationships among members.

According to (DeVito, 2019) interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages that enables individuals to build, maintain, and develop interpersonal relationships through openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality. These five characteristics are important indicators in creating effective communication. Individuals who communicate openly and respect others tend to build harmonious relationships more easily than those who communicate in closed or defensive ways.

From the perspective of the social penetration theory put forward by Altman & Taylor (Septiani et al., 2019) Interpersonal relationships develop through self-disclosure, the gradual sharing of information about oneself. In the early stages of a relationship, individuals convey only general information (the orientation stage). As the intensity of interactions and feelings of security increase, individuals begin to reveal deeper experiences, values, and feelings. This process causes the relationship to evolve from superficial to more intimate. Thus, interpersonal communication is understood as a dynamic process that allows for the development of emotional closeness and trust between individuals.

Trust between members

Trust is a person's belief or positive expectation that another party will act as expected, even though there is risk or uncertainty (Patras & Hidayat, 2019). Trust between members is the belief that other individuals have the integrity, competence, and commitment to act in accordance with mutual expectations, so that the relationship can continue safely and with mutual benefit. In organizations, trust becomes social capital that determines the effectiveness of communication, the quality of cooperation, group cohesiveness, and the sustainability of the organization as a whole. Without trust, organizational members tend to be more careful in communicating, reluctant to share information, and find it difficult to build collaboration.

According to (McAllister, 2006) trust develops gradually through repeated interaction experiences. In the initial stages, trust is built based on rational considerations of benefits and

risks (calculus-based trust). This then develops into trust based on knowledge of an individual's character (knowledge-based trust), and finally reaches the highest level of trust arising from shared values, identity, and goals (identification-based trust). This concept demonstrates that trust is the result of an ongoing process of communication and shared experiences.

In the Supportive trust theory, Jack Gibb explains that trust is formed when communication takes place in a supportive atmosphere (Agasta, 2023). Communication that demonstrates empathy, openness, spontaneity, equality, respect, and a problem-solving orientation will create a sense of psychological safety for organizational members. Conversely, communication that is defensive, evaluative, overly controlling, and inconsistent in behavior will create uncertainty and hinder the development of trust. Trust is also influenced by the consistency of an individual's behavior in carrying out their roles and responsibilities (Purnomo et al., 2026). Members who demonstrate integrity, keep commitments, and maintain confidentiality will more easily gain the trust of other members. Therefore, trust is built not only through verbal communication but also through concrete actions that reflect an individual's responsibility and reliability.

Relationship Between Interpersonal Communication and Trust Between Members

There is undoubtedly a strong link between interpersonal communication and trust among organizational members, as trust develops through positive interactions during exchanges. Interpersonal communication serves to facilitate the sharing of information, the expression of thoughts and feelings, mutual responsiveness, and the development of an understanding regarding one another's character and intentions; consequently, trust is inseparable from the communicative experiences that occur within interpersonal relationships. According to DeVito, the five dimensions of effective communication are openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. (Christiareni, 2018).

This relationship is linked to trust understood through the self-disclosure process described in Social Penetration Theory within the context of organizational communication; the study demonstrates that interpersonal communication effectiveness has a positive and significant relationship with group cohesiveness among the student organization administrators at UIN Ar-Raniry. (Amirulhaq, 2021).

Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this research lies in the effort to link two previously complementary explanations into an integrated understanding of trust formation. This integrated perspective provides a conceptual foundation for examining the true essence of interpersonal relationships in building trust among IMM members in Samarinda City.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Primary data sources are drawn from purposively selected informants and are collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Secondary data comes from archives, photographs, activity notes, and recordings relevant to the research focus (Amalia et al., 2026).

The criteria for selecting research informants included individuals actively involved for at least one term as "active cadres." For IMM alumni informants, the criteria required prior experience as an IMM board member and an understanding of the organization's dynamics, while the criterion for IMM branch chair informants was having served as a branch-level chairperson in Samarinda City. The data collection process involved interviews designed to elicit descriptions of experiences, situations, and feelings regarding the formation of trust; questions were posed to prompt accounts of experiences and to obtain clarifications or further explanations. Additionally, the interviews were complemented by participant observation and document analysis. Participants consented to having the interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim for research analysis, and initials or pseudonyms were used during data presentation.

Data analysis using Phenomenological Data Analysis techniques (Moustakas, 1994) following the eight stages as presented in Table 1 to discover the essence of the dynamics of interpersonal communication in building trust between organizational members. NVivo 12 was used to present the data and facilitate the simplification of the interview results.

Table 1. Data Collection Analysis Stage

No.	Activity	Description Stage
1	Data Collection	Collect data through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation.
2	Data Transcription	Transcribe all interview recordings verbatim into written text.
3	Thorough Reading	Read the transcripts in their entirety to gain a general understanding of the informants.
4	Identifying Meaning Units	Identify significant statements relevant to the phenomenon.
5	Theme Grouping	Group meaning units into broader phenomenological themes.
6	Textural Description	Develop textural descriptions: what cadres experience in interpersonal communication.
7	Structural Description	Develop structural descriptions: how and why the communication occurs.
8	Synthesis of Essence	Synthesizing textural and structural descriptions to discover the essence of interpersonal communication of IMM members.

Source: Adapted from Moustakas (1994)

The data validity technique used triangulation as the primary validation method, supplemented by member checks to ensure the accuracy of the phenomenological interpretation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from active cadres, alumni, and the head of the Samarinda City IMM branch. Technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of in-depth interviews with the results of observations of informants (Hasbiansyah, 2008).

Before and during data collection, the researcher explicitly identified and documented prior assumptions concerning interpersonal communication, organizational relationships,

leadership, and trust among IMM cadres. These assumptions were recorded in reflexive notes and were revisited throughout the interview and analysis processes. During interviews, the researcher used open-ended questions and avoided leading participants toward concepts derived from the literature or the theoretical framework. Participants were encouraged to describe their experiences using their own words and meanings.

Instead, significant statements and meaning units were first derived from the participants' narratives. Theoretical perspectives were subsequently used to interpret and contextualize the phenomenological themes after the experiential meanings had been identified. Reflexive notes were maintained throughout the research process to document the researcher's reactions, assumptions, emerging interpretations, and decisions concerning coding and theme development. The researcher also repeatedly returned to the original transcripts and participants' descriptions to ensure that emerging interpretations remained grounded in their direct experiences. This process enhanced transparency by making explicit how the researcher managed preconceptions while attempting to preserve the participants' perspectives as the primary source of phenomenological meaning.

Throughout the research process, data collection activities were documented, and official letters of verification were obtained to ensure the data met the established criteria; additionally, the research was conducted across various locations. Data collection involved a single room and one informant at a time to prevent bias during the interview process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows that the study involved 10 informants, comprising six men and four women. This composition ensures a diversity of perspectives in understanding the interpersonal relationship experiences and the process of trust-building among IMM cadres in Samarinda City. The informants' characteristics align with IMM's Statutes and Bylaws (AD/ART) regarding age limits and membership status. At the Regency/City level (PC IMM), the maximum age for leadership positions is 27 years. Meanwhile, at the university level (PK IMM), the AD/ART does not specify an age limit; consequently, individuals may participate in leadership and commissariat activities as long as they remain active students, subject to the age limits applicable at the Regency and City levels. This study involved 10 purposively selected informants: 5 active cadres, 4 alumni, and 1 head of the IMM branch in Samarinda City, as listed in Table 2. Informants were selected for their direct involvement, organizational experience, and ability to reflect on interpersonal communication in the IMM environment.

Table 2 presents information on interviews conducted with participants from various backgrounds, including active members directly involved in daily activities, alumni who can provide reflective and historical perspectives, and branch leaders, who serve as key informants with a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics. The informants in this study were predominantly male and female, and the interview results were visualized in NVivo, as shown in Figure 1.

Table 2. Identity of Research Informants

No.	Informant's Initials	Sex	Position	Year Joined IMM
1	EMS	P	Ketua Umum IMM Kota Samarinda	2021
2	AA	L	Sekretaris Umum IMM Kota Samarinda	2022
3	AM	L	Ketua Umum IMM FKM UMKT	2023
4	AA	P	Sekretaris Umum IMM Unmul Raya	2024
5	DA	P	Sekretaris Umum IMM Samarinda Seberang	2021
6	A	P	Ketua Umum IMM FEBP UMKT	2023
7	M	L	Alumni / Kepala Dinas Pemuda, Olahraga & Pariwisata Kota Samarinda	1998
8	J	L	Alumni / Direktur Istiqamah Boarding School	1972
9	D	L	Alumni / Penulis & Influencer	2018
10	BR	L	Alumni / Sekretaris DPD IMM Kaltim	2015

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on the data collection results from 10 informants, several phenomenological themes emerged, as shown in Table 3:

The first theme demonstrates that interpersonal communication is considered the primary foundation for building trust among cadres. Informants revealed that high-intensity communication and ongoing interaction enable cadres to get to know one another, understand one another's characters, and build closer relationships.

The second theme illustrates that trust is not built quickly, but rather through a gradual process of self-disclosure. As the frequency of interaction increases, cadres begin to share personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings, so that what was initially a formal relationship develops into a more intimate and trusting one.

The third theme demonstrates that interpersonal communication stems from cadres' social needs for acceptance, support, relationship-building, and a sense of belonging within the organization. Cadres communicate not only for the benefit of the organization but also to fulfill

their need for affection and a sense of togetherness within the organization's social environment.

The fourth theme highlights the importance of supportive communication from leadership. Simple acts of attention, such as listening to cadres' aspirations, asking how they are, and providing positive responses, are considered capable of increasing cadres' trust in their leaders and the organization as a whole.

The fifth theme demonstrates that informal communication plays a significant role in building emotional closeness among cadres. Interactions outside of formal forums, such as casual discussions, group activities, and daily conversations, provide a broader space for mutual understanding, thus strengthening interpersonal relationships.

The sixth theme identifies communication barriers, including emotional inconsistencies among leaders, differences in cadre backgrounds, a lack of openness, and the emergence of small groups within the organization. These barriers have the potential to lead to misunderstandings that can reduce trust among cadres.

The seventh theme demonstrates that face-to-face communication is considered more effective than digital communication in building trust. In-person presence allows cadres to capture facial expressions, body language, and emotional responses that cannot be fully conveyed through digital media.

Table 3. Phenomenological Themes of Interpersonal Communication Experiences in Building Trust Among IMM Cadres in Samarinda City

No.	Phenomenological Theme	Key Informant Initials	Relevant Theory
1	Interpersonal communication as a foundation for trust	EM, BR, DO, AM, A	Social Penetration (Altman&Taylor)
2	The gradual process of self-disclosure	EM, DO, DA, AA, A, J	Social Penetration (Altman&Taylor)
3	Interpersonal needs as a driver of communication	AA, J, AM, AA, DA	FIRO (Schutz)
4	Supportive leadership communication as a catalyst for trust	EM, J, AA, AM	Trust (Gibb)
5	The central role of informal communication in building closeness	DO, BR, AM, A, AA	Social Penetration (Altman&Taylor)
6	Communication barriers: emotional inconsistency & the cadre gap	AA, J, DA, AM, EM, M	Trust (Gibb)
7	Face-to-face vs. digital communication in building trust	J, DO, M, AA, AM	Social Penetration (Altman&Taylor)

Source: Results of research data analysis (2026)



Figure 1. Visualization of the in-depth interview results from 10 informants
Source : NVivo Research data, 2026

The seven themes of interpersonal communication dynamics produced in this study are summarized in the NVivo 12 visualization in Figure 2.

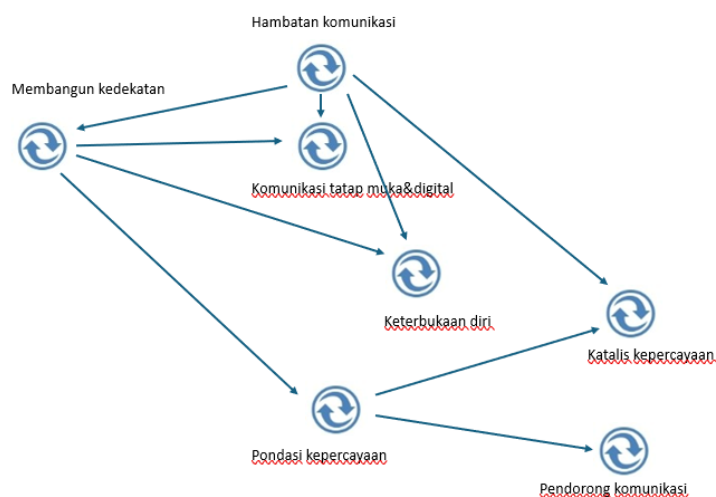


Figure 2. Visualization of 7 themes from 10 informants
Source : NVivo Research data, 2026

1. Communication Barriers

The theme of communication barriers shows that the communication process is not always effective. This shows that the Muhammadiyah Student Association still faces obstacles in communication, which aligns with the phenomenon described in the research background. Where cadres feel that their opinions are not taken into account, giving rise to feelings of suspicion towards other cadres. This situation shows that less effective interpersonal communication can hinder the formation of trust within the organization.

These obstacles arise due to differences in perception, a lack of courage to express opinions, limited time, and emotional factors that influence the delivery and reception of messages. These obstacles prevent the message from being received in its entirety, potentially leading to misunderstandings. Communication barriers are among the most

common challenges faced by IMM Samarinda City cadres in building trust among cadres. These obstacles include a lack of open communication, inconsistencies in leadership attitudes, differences in perceptions among members, and limited communication when relying solely on digital media. This condition causes some cadres to feel underappreciated, reluctant to express their opinions, and even to doubt other members.

From an interpersonal communication perspective, communication barriers are factors that can reduce the effectiveness of interactions if not addressed through open and empathetic communication. This finding aligns with research showing that communication barriers are often influenced by psychological, social, and environmental factors, thus requiring adaptive communication strategies to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships (Dewi & Euriga, 2025).

While defensive communication can create uncertainty and reduce interpersonal trust, open, supportive, and consistent communication creates a positive communication climate, allowing members to feel safe interacting. Therefore, the communication barriers identified in this study are factors that slow down the process of building trust within the IMM in Samarinda City. If communication barriers are not addressed, the scenario Gibbs feared regarding defensive communication could well come to pass. These findings reinforce the view that an individual's internal characteristics are among the factors influencing the quality of interpersonal communication. According to Gibb, trust develops within a supportive communication climate one characterized by openness, empathy, respect for others, equality, a problem-solving orientation, and consistency between words and actions.

"The challenge lies in dealing with the leadership's moods" (Interview with AA, Sekretaris Umum IMM Samarinda, 2026).

2. Building Closeness

Literally, closeness between cadres refers to an interpersonal relationship that develops through consistent interaction. This closeness is typically built through attention, empathy, mutual respect, and sustained communication. Informants believe that good relationships don't form instantly but require time and shared experiences. This finding aligns with interpersonal relationship theory, which explains that emotional closeness develops through the frequency of communication and the quality of interactions. The more frequently individuals interact positively, the greater the chance of forming close and mutually supportive relationships.

Applying the "onion" analogy from Social Penetration Theory, the interpersonal relationships among members of IMM Samarinda City have reached the middle layer. This indicates that the intensity of their connections has evolved toward closer and deeper relationships, as they have begun to share experiences, opinions, feelings, and values with those they trust.

"If you chat and joke around together often, your relationship usually becomes closer. As a result, any problems or miscommunications become easier to resolve." (Interview with A, Ketua Umum IMM FEBP UMKT, 2026).

3. Face-to-Face and Digital Communication

In this communication process, there remains a strong relationship between face-to-face and digital communication. Both forms of communication have complementary roles. Face-to-face communication is considered more effective in conveying emotions, expressions, and nonverbal language, thereby reducing misunderstandings. Through direct communication, cadres can understand the other person's facial expressions, intonation, body language, and emotional responses, reducing the likelihood of misperceptions. Conversely, digital communication is used more for coordinating activities and conveying information but is less able to build emotional closeness, both across distance and over time.

These results reflect changing communication patterns in the digital era, where technology has become a crucial medium for maintaining interpersonal relationships. However, digital communication still requires good communication skills to ensure messages are not misinterpreted. From an interpersonal communication perspective, face-to-face communication offers the opportunity for direct feedback, enabling faster relationship-building than communication via digital media.

"In my opinion, face-to-face communication remains more effective than communication via chat or social media, because meeting in person allows us to directly observe the other person's expressions, body language, and reactions." (Interview with M, Alumni/Kepala Dinas Pemuda Olahraga dan Pariwisata Kota Samarinda, 2026).

4. Self-Disclosure

According to self-disclosure theory, self-disclosure is a gradual process that develops as a sense of security increases in a relationship. Individuals tend to be more open when they feel accepted, valued, and free from judgment by their conversation partner. Therefore, openness is the foundation for effective communication. This theme demonstrates that within an organization, building trust between members requires time and a high level of confidence. This occurs when new members feel accepted and comfortable within the organizational environment. When feelings arise, the opportunity to disclose personal experiences, feelings, and perspectives on the organization is done gradually, depending on the level of closeness with the interlocutor.

Among IMM cadres in Samarinda City, self-disclosure not only facilitates information exchange but also strengthens solidarity among members. Open-minded members tend to gain more social support and gain the trust of other members. These findings reinforce the view that an individual's internal characteristics are among the factors influencing the quality of interpersonal communication

"I don't open up to everyone easily. It takes time to get to know and understand others. Once trust has been established, I'll open up to them." (Interview with DA, Sekretaris Umum IMM Samarinda Seberang, 2026)

5. *Trust Catalyst*

Regarding trust catalysts, the visualization in Figure 1 shows a relationship between them and the acceleration of trust formation among cadres. When an organizational leader plays a significant role and makes time for members, it makes them feel cared for and appreciated. A leader's open attitude, respect for members' opinions, support, and consistency between words and actions are factors that strengthen interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, consistent behavior, the ability to maintain confidentiality, honesty, empathy, and a willingness to provide support when needed are key factors.

Therefore, it is clear that trust is built not only through verbal communication but also through concrete actions that reflect an individual's integrity. When someone demonstrates consistent and reliable behavior, trust levels will gradually increase.

"In my view, members are more inclined to place their trust in leaders who are open and do not restrict communication. Sometimes, simple gestures such as listening to members' stories or asking how they are doing have a significant impact on the relationships that are built." (Interview with EM, Ketua Umum IMM Samarinda, 2026)

6. *Foundation of Trust*

Establishing a trusting relationship between team members and their leaders is a key asset in maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. This trust allows individuals to feel safe communicating openly, sharing experiences, and working together to achieve common goals.

In interpersonal relationship theory, trust is a fundamental component that determines the quality of long-term relationships. Relationships based on trust result in more open communication, mutual respect, and the ability to resolve conflicts more constructively.

"I think interpersonal communication in IMM has been built from the very beginning, not when we were at the branch, but since we first joined IMM." (Interview with BR, Sekretaris DPD IMM Kaltim, 2026).

7. *Communication Driver*

The theory explained by (Schutz, 1958) on interpersonal needs, namely inclusion, control, and affection, make these things and needs the most important in creating interpersonal communication in an organization. When individuals feel valued and accepted in a relationship, they are more motivated to communicate actively.

These findings suggest that communication is influenced not only by an individual's ability to convey a message but also by the quality of the pre-existing relationship. The greater the level of trust and closeness, the greater the individual's motivation to maintain effective communication.

"This organization's activities give us the opportunity to interact, exchange ideas, and build networks. Through these interactions, I feel more accepted and have a place within the organization." (Interview with AA, Sekretaris Umum IMM Unmul Raya, 2026)

Overall, this research is in line with that conducted by (Griffin et al., 2023) which states that trust is present and formed through a gradual process of self-disclosure. In the context of IMM, this trust process begins with cadre formation and develops through various formal and informal interaction forums. The more intensive and diverse the shared communication contexts, the deeper the layers of trust formed. This aligns with the findings obtained from interviews with informants in theme 5. This theme demonstrates that interactions in formal forums have proven effective in unlocking deeper layers of self-disclosure.

The main contribution of this study lies in its success in explaining the process of trust formation through the subjective experiences of student organization cadres, rather than simply identifying the relationship between interpersonal communication and trust, as previous research has shown. This study shows that trust develops through three interrelated pathways: the cognitive pathway, which is formed through assessments of an individual's integrity and consistency; the affective pathway, which develops through emotional closeness, empathy, and supportive communication; and the behavioural pathway, which is built through experiences of working together and involvement in various organizational activities (Setianingsih, 2022). These three channels form a communication cycle that strengthens solidarity, organizational cohesion, and the sustainability of interpersonal relationships between cadres.

This research was developed through ongoing interactions involving the exchange of information, experiences, and emotional support among cadres. This situation emphasizes that interpersonal communication functions as social capital that supports organizational sustainability. This finding is supported by research conducted by (Amirulhaq, 2021) which explains a positive relationship between the effectiveness of interpersonal communication and the cohesiveness of student organizations. However, this study shows that interpersonal communication not only fosters cohesion but also builds trust, forming the basis of relationships within the organization.

In addition, the findings of this study support the research of (Mayasari et al., 2024), which states that interpersonal communication can create harmony and strengthen trust in the workplace. Furthermore, this communication supports Altman and Taylor's theory of social penetration, which explains that interpersonal relationships develop through a gradual process of self-disclosure (Griffin et al., 2023). In the initial stages, individuals share only general information, then gradually reveal more personal information as the relationship grows closer. Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings of this study indicate that IMM cadres experience a similar process, where trust grows as they begin to share personal experiences, discuss various experiences and problems they have encountered, and engage in organizational activities together. This is similar to research conducted by (Khairani et al., 2019), which revealed that self-confidence and comfort in interactions influence openness in communication between cadres. However, this study did not focus on self-image as the primary variable; rather, it focused on interpersonal communication experiences in building trust.

Another study conducted by (Diniraisa, 2025) found that openness and trust in communication can strengthen friendships between students. In this study, IMM cadres in Samarinda City also revealed that trust is formed through intense communication and gradual self-disclosure. However, this study provides more in-depth findings because it not only examines openness as a factor in interpersonal relationships but also explains the process of trust formation through the cadres' subjective experiences within the organization.

Furthermore, the Fundamental Theory of Interpersonal Relations Orientation explains the motivation of cadres in building interpersonal communication. The theory explained by (Schutz, 1958) on interpersonal needs, namely inclusion, control, and affection, make these things and needs the most important in creating interpersonal communication in an organization (Neville, 1989). Research shows that cadres need inclusion, emotional closeness, and participation in organizational life. This theory is consistent because it states that active interaction can build closer interpersonal relationships. When the need for affection and inclusion is met, cadres feel like an important part of the organization, thereby increasing trust among fellow cadres and leaders. This role can also build a trusting organizational climate. Leaders who are open, responsive, and attentive to cadres can create a positive communication atmosphere.

This research is also in line with research conducted by (Harjana, 2013) Gibb's trust theory states that supportive, open, and consistent communication is a key prerequisite for building trust in interpersonal relationships. In the context of IMM Samarinda City, simple attention from leaders carries significant meaning for cadres because it provides a sense of being valued and recognized as part of the organization. Furthermore, informal communication contributes significantly to building emotional closeness. Interactions outside formal organizational forums provide opportunities for cadres to get to know one another on a more personal level. On the other hand, the results of this study indicate various communication barriers that can hinder the formation of trust. Emotional inconsistency in leadership, a lack of openness, differences in character, and the emergence of small groups can lead to misunderstandings within the organization. These results indicate that trust is highly dependent on the consistency of individual behavior and communication. When cadres are unable to predict the leader's response or attitude, uncertainty arises and can undermine trust.

Another research that is in line is research conducted by (Irawati, 2023) regarding interpersonal communication in building parental trust, which shows that openness, empathy, and equality are important factors in building trust. Open communication, leadership attention to cadres, and equal relationships are key to strengthening trust among cadres. The difference lies in the research context: Irawati's study focused on family relationships, while this study focuses on student organizations.

CONCLUSION

The deepest essence of the participants' experiences reveals that trust among Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM) cadres in Samarinda City is experienced as a gradual process of feeling safe, accepted, valued, and understood through continuous

interpersonal communication. For the participants, trust is not something that is immediately given to another person, but something that grows through repeated interaction and is strengthened when communication is accompanied by openness, empathy, consistency, and shared experiences. The experience of being listened to, receiving attention from leaders and fellow cadres, being able to express personal thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment, and experiencing consistency between words and actions gradually transforms formal organizational relationships into relationships characterized by closeness and trust.

The participants' experiences further show that the formation of trust is a dynamic process involving interconnected dimensions of communication. Initial interactions create opportunities for recognition and acceptance; continued interaction encourages gradual self-disclosure; emotional support and informal communication deepen interpersonal closeness; and shared organizational experiences provide opportunities for cadres to assess one another's integrity, reliability, and commitment. Supportive leadership strengthens this process by creating a communication climate in which cadres feel recognized and respected. Conversely, limited openness, differences in perceptions and backgrounds, emotional inconsistency, subgroup formation, and dependence on digital communication can create uncertainty and hinder the development of trust. Thus, the phenomenon is not simply about whether cadres communicate frequently, but about whether their communication creates a meaningful relational experience in which they feel safe to open themselves and confident in the consistency of others.

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