



The Impact of Interpersonal Communication on Thesis Completion Motivation among KPI Students

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Abstract

This study examines the role of interpersonal communication in enhancing thesis completion motivation among KPI 2022 batch students at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping, where low motivation often leads to procrastination and delayed graduation. Grounded in interpersonal communication, role, and motivation theories, this descriptive qualitative study collected data through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis using purposive sampling. Findings reveal that harmonious supervisor-student communication including clear guidance, constructive criticism, and emotional support significantly strengthens students' self-confidence and consistency. Positive reinforcement, intrinsic motivation, and support from family and peers form an effective synergy, while negative reinforcement such as criticism and deadlines functions as a productive stimulus rather than an obstacle. This study contributes empirical evidence from an Islamic higher education context in West Sumatra, demonstrating that supervisor-student interpersonal communication serves as a multidimensional motivational mechanism bridging relational, emotional, and academic dimensions of thesis supervision.

INTRODUCTION

Completing a thesis is a crucial stage in higher education because it reflects students' ability to apply academic theories, research methods, and scientific writing skills acquired during their studies (Armadila, 2025). However, many university students experience difficulties in completing their theses on time due to low motivation, academic pressure, procrastination, and psychological challenges (Ramadhan, 2020; Sari, 2021). These obstacles often lead to delays in graduation and decreased academic performance (Ramadhan, 2020).

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One factor that may influence students' motivation in completing their theses is interpersonal communication. Effective interpersonal communication between students and academic advisors, peers, and family can provide emotional support, guidance, feedback, and encouragement that help students remain motivated during the thesis-writing process (Muslikhah et al., 2024). Supportive communication is believed to strengthen students' self-confidence, reduce stress, and encourage persistence in overcoming academic challenges (Didik Hariyanto, 2021). Although previous studies have discussed interpersonal communication and learning motivation, most research has focused on classroom learning contexts or general academic achievement. Limited studies specifically examine how interpersonal communication affects students' motivation in completing their theses, particularly among students of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) programs in Islamic higher education institutions (Pandya, 2023). In addition, previous research rarely highlights the combined role of academic advisors, peers, and family support as interconnected sources of motivational reinforcement in the thesis completion process (Rahman, 2023). This study therefore offers novelty by examining interpersonal communication as a multidimensional support system that influences thesis completion motivation among KPI students at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping.

Based on this gap, the objective of this research is to analyze the impact of interpersonal communication on students' motivation to complete their theses (Wahid et al., n.d.). This study focuses on KPI students of STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping class of 2022 who are currently undergoing the thesis-writing process.

METHODS

Research Design This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to gain an in-depth understanding of how interpersonal communication shapes thesis completion motivation (Ash-Shiddiqi et al., 2025). This approach is particularly appropriate given the study's focus on relational and emotional dimensions of supervisor–student interaction aspects that quantitative measures cannot adequately capture. Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to explore lived experiences, perceptions, and communicative behaviors within their natural academic context (Moleong & Lexy J, 2021).

Participants and Sampling Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on two inclusion criteria: (1) students from the KPI 2022 batch at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping who were actively engaged in the thesis writing process, and (2) thesis supervisors with at least one active supervisee from the same batch. A total of 10 informants were involved 7 students and 3 supervisors a sample size considered sufficient to achieve data saturation in qualitative studies of this scope. Students who had completed their thesis defense or were on academic leave were excluded. **Data Collection** Data were collected through three complementary techniques: 1) In-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes per session, conducted face-to-face to explore informants' direct experiences and perceptions regarding supervisory communication and its motivational impact (Zuchri Abdussamad, 2021); 2) Participatory observation direct observation of supervision sessions and informal campus interactions over a four-week period, focusing on communication patterns, tone, and relational dynamics between students and supervisors (Stefi & Harilama, 2021); 3) Document analysis, review of supplementary materials including supervision logbooks, academic progress records, and formal correspondence between students and supervisors, used to corroborate and contextualize interview findings (Wafa et al., 2025).

Data Analysis Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising three iterative stages (Ash-Shiddiqi et al., 2025): (1) data reduction, systematic selection and simplification of field data; (2) data display,

organized presentation of information to identify emerging patterns; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification interpretive analysis of thematic meanings. The coding process involved open coding to identify initial categories, followed by axial coding to establish relationships among themes such as *emotional support*, *positive reinforcement*, *relational trust*, and *motivational consistency*.

Validity and Trustworthiness Credibility was ensured through source triangulation (cross-checking data across students, supervisors, and documents) and methodological triangulation (comparing findings from interviews, observation, and documents). Member checking was also conducted by returning key findings to selected informants for confirmation (Armadila, 2022).

Research Ethics All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Informants were assured of confidentiality, and their identities are anonymized throughout the reporting. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence (Dani & Andika, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Interpersonal Communication on Thesis Completion Motivation among KPI Students

Supportive Communication as a Source of Academic Motivation

The findings show that interpersonal communication between students and academic advisors plays a significant role in strengthening students' motivation to complete their theses. Students generally perceived their advisors as communicative, approachable, and supportive throughout the supervision process (Didik Hariyanto, 2021). Communication was reflected through clear explanations, constructive feedback, and opportunities for open discussion. These interactions created a comfortable academic atmosphere in which students felt safe expressing difficulties and asking questions.

This finding confirms Devito's theory of interpersonal communication, which emphasizes openness, empathy, supportiveness, and positive attitudes as key characteristics of effective interpersonal relationships (Devito, 2011; Pandya, 2023). The data indicate that when advisors communicate clearly and respectfully, students experience greater confidence and emotional security during thesis preparation. Therefore, communication functions not only as a channel for academic instruction but also as a psychological support mechanism.

More importantly, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that interpersonal communication in thesis supervision operates simultaneously on academic and emotional dimensions. Advisors are not merely providers of technical guidance; they also act as motivational figures who help students manage stress, self-doubt, and academic pressure during the thesis-writing process.

Dialogic Communication and Student Autonomy

Another important finding is the emergence of dialogic communication patterns between students and advisors. Although differences in expectations occasionally occurred, students generally responded by discussing their perspectives politely and supporting their arguments with research evidence. This indicates that the supervision process was not entirely hierarchical but involved negotiation and mutual understanding (Rahman, 2023).

This finding partially challenges the traditional perception of academic supervision as a one-way authority relationship. Instead, the results suggest that effective thesis supervision is characterized by collaborative communication, where students are encouraged to participate actively in academic discussions. Such interaction strengthens students' sense of autonomy and intellectual responsibility.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the idea that interpersonal communication is most effective when both parties engage in reciprocal interaction. The dialogic nature of communication allows students to develop confidence in defending their ideas while still respecting the advisor's authority. Consequently, motivation emerges not only from external encouragement but also from students' growing sense of competence and academic ownership.

Emotional Support as Positive Reinforcement

The study also found that emotional support from advisors contributed significantly to sustaining students' persistence in completing their theses. Encouragement, appreciation, and consistent attention from advisors created a positive psychological climate that motivated students to remain committed despite various academic challenges (Maslihan Su'ban Ma'ruf, 2025).

This finding supports positive reinforcement theory, which explains that appreciation and encouragement can strengthen desired behavior. In this context, supportive communication acts as positive reinforcement that encourages students to continue making progress in their thesis work. However, this study further demonstrates that reinforcement in academic supervision is not limited to formal praise. Simple interpersonal behaviors such as active listening, empathy, and responsiveness also function as motivational reinforcement.

Thus, the research contributes to the broader literature by highlighting that emotional communication in academic supervision is equally as important as technical academic guidance. The effectiveness of supervision depends not only on the advisor's expertise but also on their ability to establish supportive interpersonal relationships with students.

Forms of Positive Reinforcement That Help Students Stay Motivated, Whether From Faculty, Themselves, or Their Surroundings.

Positive Reinforcement from Academic Advisors

The findings reveal that positive reinforcement from academic advisors significantly contributes to students' motivation in completing their theses. Students perceived that advisors who provided encouragement, appreciation, and constructive guidance helped reduce anxiety and strengthened their confidence during the thesis-writing process. Supportive communication from advisors created a sense of emotional security that encouraged students to continue working despite experiencing academic pressure and revision challenges (Sari, 2021).

This finding supports positive reinforcement theory, which argues that appreciation, encouragement, and supportive responses can strengthen desired behavior. In this context, motivational guidance from advisors reinforces students' commitment and persistence in completing their theses. However, this study extends the theory by showing that reinforcement in academic supervision is not limited to formal rewards or praise. Interpersonal behaviors such as empathy, responsiveness, and emotionally supportive communication also function as powerful motivational stimuli.

Furthermore, the results indicate that advisor support contributes not only to short-term motivation but also to students' academic resilience. Students become more confident in handling revisions and research obstacles because they perceive the advisor as both an academic mentor and an emotional supporter. This demonstrates that interpersonal communication plays a dual role in the supervision process: facilitating academic understanding while simultaneously strengthening students' psychological endurance.

Intrinsic Motivation as Internal Academic Strength

Besides external encouragement, intrinsic motivation emerged as a major factor sustaining students' consistency in completing their theses. Students expressed that the desire to graduate on time, achieve personal goals, fulfill future aspirations, and

make their families proud became strong internal motivations that kept them persistent throughout the research process (Nurwalidah Nasution, 2021).

These findings confirm intrinsic motivation theory, which emphasizes that behavior driven by personal goals and self-fulfillment tends to be more sustainable than behavior driven solely by external pressure. Students who possessed strong personal aspirations demonstrated higher levels of persistence even when encountering difficulties such as revisions, limited references, or emotional exhaustion (Hendra & Hakim, 2023).

Critically, this study highlights that intrinsic motivation and interpersonal communication are interconnected rather than separate factors. Supportive communication from advisors and family members appears to strengthen students' internal motivation, suggesting that external reinforcement can nurture and sustain intrinsic academic commitment. This finding contributes to the broader literature by showing that intrinsic motivation in thesis completion is socially reinforced through positive interpersonal relationships.

Social Support as a Motivational Environment

The findings also show that family support, peer encouragement, and a supportive academic environment function as important forms of positive reinforcement. Students acknowledged that emotional encouragement from parents, discussions with friends, and a conducive campus atmosphere helped them remain motivated and emotionally stable during the thesis-writing process (Acmas S, 2022).

This finding reinforces the social dimension of motivation theory, which suggests that motivation is shaped not only by individual factors but also by environmental influences. Social support creates a sense of belonging, reduces feelings of isolation, and strengthens students' confidence in overcoming academic difficulties. In particular, peer support contributes to the formation of collective motivation, where students encourage one another to complete their studies on time.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that positive reinforcement operates as a multidimensional system involving academic, emotional, and social support simultaneously. The interaction between these factors creates a motivational climate that helps students maintain consistency and resilience throughout the thesis completion process.

Negative Reinforcement, Such as Criticism, Pressure, and Academic Consequences, Acts as Either a Motivator or an Obstacle for Students.

Constructive Criticism as Motivational Reinforcement

The findings indicate that criticism and reprimands from academic advisors are generally perceived positively by students and function as motivational reinforcement rather than psychological barriers. Students viewed criticism as constructive feedback that helped them recognize weaknesses in their work and improve the quality of their theses. Instead of discouraging them, corrective feedback increased their enthusiasm to revise and complete their research (Buddhis et al., 2024).

This finding supports Skinner's behavioral perspective, which suggests that negative reinforcement can regulate behavior and encourage improvement when delivered appropriately. However, the present study expands this perspective by emphasizing the importance of interpersonal communication in shaping how criticism is interpreted. The effectiveness of negative reinforcement depends not merely on the presence of criticism itself, but on the advisor's communication style in delivering it. When criticism is communicated respectfully, clearly, and supportively, students perceive it as guidance rather than punishment.

This finding also challenges the assumption that reprimands in academic supervision necessarily reduce students' confidence or motivation. Instead, constructive criticism can strengthen students' academic resilience because it encourages self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Therefore, the relational

quality between advisor and student becomes a determining factor in transforming criticism into productive motivation.

Academic Pressure and the Limits of External Control

The study further found that formal academic pressure, such as deadlines and administrative consequences, was not the primary factor motivating students to complete their theses. Most students acknowledged the existence of academic pressure; however, they did not perceive it as excessively burdensome. Rather than being driven by fear of sanctions or delayed graduation, students were more strongly motivated by personal goals and self-fulfillment (Deddy Mulayana, 2004).

This finding partially contrasts with traditional behaviorist assumptions that external pressure strongly determines behavior. Instead, the results align more closely with Deci and Ryan's intrinsic motivation theory, which argues that internally driven motivation is more sustainable and effective than externally imposed pressure. Students with strong intrinsic goals demonstrated greater persistence regardless of deadlines or formal academic demands.

Critically, the findings suggest that excessive pressure may even become counterproductive if not balanced with emotional support and constructive communication. This demonstrates that negative reinforcement alone is insufficient to maintain long-term academic motivation. Students require supportive interpersonal relationships that help them interpret academic challenges positively rather than as oppressive burdens. **The Role of Social Support in Balancing Negative Reinforcement**

Another important finding is that social support from family, peers, and the academic environment acts as a balancing factor that prevents negative reinforcement from becoming psychologically harmful. When students experienced stress, technical obstacles, or emotional exhaustion, support from their social environment helped stabilize their motivation and maintain their confidence.

This finding extends previous literature by showing that negative reinforcement operates effectively only when accompanied by supportive social relationships. Constructive criticism becomes acceptable because students simultaneously receive encouragement, empathy, and emotional reassurance from people around them. Consequently, interpersonal communication functions as a mediator that transforms potentially stressful experiences into opportunities for growth and learning. The study therefore highlights that academic motivation is shaped through the interaction between corrective feedback, intrinsic goals, and social-emotional support. These factors do not operate independently but collectively form a motivational system that strengthens students' perseverance during thesis completion.

The Overall Role of Interpersonal Communication in Influencing Students' Motivation to Complete Their Theses

Face-to-Face Communication and Academic Understanding

The findings demonstrate that interpersonal communication plays a central role in shaping students' motivation and persistence in completing their theses. One of the most significant findings is that students perceive face-to-face communication with academic advisors as more effective than online interaction. Direct meetings allow students to obtain clearer explanations, immediate feedback, and deeper discussions regarding research problems. Students also feel more confident asking questions and clarifying misunderstandings during in-person consultations (Syahrul Abidin, 2022).

This finding confirms Devito's theory that face-to-face interpersonal communication enhances message clarity, emotional closeness, and feedback effectiveness. In the context of thesis supervision, communication is not merely an exchange of academic information but also a relational process that builds trust and

psychological comfort. The findings further suggest that communication effectiveness in academic supervision is strongly influenced by interaction quality rather than solely by the transfer of information.

Moreover, this study expands previous literature by highlighting that face-to-face communication contributes to students' emotional assurance and academic confidence simultaneously. While digital communication may facilitate efficiency, students still perceive direct interaction as more meaningful for resolving complex academic problems and maintaining motivation throughout the thesis-writing process.

Peer Communication as Collective Motivation

The study also found that interpersonal communication among peers functions as an important source of collective motivation. Students described peer interaction as a space for sharing experiences, discussing research difficulties, exchanging solutions, and providing emotional encouragement when facing mental exhaustion or academic stagnation. Observing upperclassmen successfully completing thesis examinations also inspired students to finish their own theses on time.

This finding supports Rakhmat's view that interpersonal communication fosters social influence, emotional support, and solidarity within groups. However, the findings further demonstrate that peer communication creates a collaborative motivational environment in which students collectively sustain one another's academic commitment. Motivation therefore emerges not only individually but also socially through interaction with peers experiencing similar struggles.

Critically, these findings challenge the tendency in previous studies to focus mainly on advisor-student relationships while underestimating the role of peer communication in thesis completion. The results indicate that peers act as informal support systems that help reduce feelings of isolation, restore motivation, and encourage problem-solving during difficult stages of research.

Family Communication and Emotional Stability

Another important finding is the strong influence of family communication on students' emotional and motivational stability. Students reported that family members continuously reminded them to stay disciplined, manage time effectively, maintain their health, and remain focused on completing their studies. This support strengthened students' sense of responsibility and reinforced their long-term academic goals.

The findings align with Effendy's perspective that family communication creates deep emotional bonds, making advice and encouragement easier to internalize. Family support operates not only as verbal encouragement but also as emotional reassurance that helps students cope with academic pressure and uncertainty during the thesis-writing process.

Importantly, this study extends the literature by demonstrating that family communication indirectly contributes to academic resilience. Emotional support from family helps students regulate stress and maintain psychological balance, enabling them to remain consistent despite obstacles. Therefore, motivation in thesis completion cannot be understood solely from an academic perspective but must also be examined within broader interpersonal and familial contexts.

Interpersonal Communication as a Transformative Process

The findings further reveal that interpersonal communication functions not only as information exchange but also as a transformative process that shapes students' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. Communication with advisors strengthens academic competence and responsibility, peer interaction fosters solidarity and emotional support, while family communication reinforces moral encouragement and self-discipline.

This finding supports Silfia Hanani's argument that interpersonal communication can influence behavioral change and self-regulation. Reprimands from advisors and reminders from family members encourage students to reduce procrastination, manage time effectively, and remain committed to completing their theses. At the same time, emotional support from peers reduces anxiety and enhances self-confidence.

Critically, the study contributes to the broader literature by conceptualizing interpersonal communication as an integrated motivational system rather than isolated interpersonal interactions. The synergy between advisor communication, peer support, and family encouragement creates a comprehensive support network that strengthens students' academic resilience and persistence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interpersonal communication plays a significant role in enhancing the motivation of 2022 KPI students at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping to complete their theses. Three main findings can be summarized as follows.

First, academic advisors effectively fulfill a dual role: that of academic mentor and motivator. The quality of communication marked by clear guidance, openness to dialogue, constructive criticism, and moral support has been shown to foster students' self-confidence and create a conducive supervisory environment. A dialogic and two-way communication pattern transforms the supervision process from mere instruction into an empowering space for academic negotiation.

Second, the positive reinforcement received by students stems from three complementary layers: the academic advisor's appreciation and guidance as a catalyst for enthusiasm; intrinsic motivation in the form of the desire to graduate on time and personal satisfaction as a long-term driver; and support from family and peers as a buffer when students face obstacles. The synergy of these three sources of reinforcement forms a solid and resilient motivational system. Third, negative reinforcement in the form of criticism and academic pressure is not perceived as an obstacle but is constructively accepted as a means of self-evaluation. This is possible because criticism is conveyed within a supportive and empathetic communication framework, shifting its function from pressure to a catalyst for motivation. Strong intrinsic motivation within students also plays a role in neutralizing the negative impact of formal academic pressure.

Research Implications : Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of DeVito's interpersonal communication theory and Skinner's reinforcement theory in the context of higher education, while demonstrating that academic motivation is the result of a dynamic interaction between internal and external factors. Practically, these findings imply the need for higher education institutions to design thesis advising systems that are not only focused on technical-academic aspects but also consider psychological and communicative dimensions. Training in interpersonal communication skills for thesis advisors, peer-mentoring programs, and the involvement of families in the academic support ecosystem are relevant policy recommendations for implementation.

Recommendations for Further Research : This study has limitations regarding its scope, which is restricted to a single program of study and a single cohort; therefore, generalizing the findings should be done with caution. Future research is recommended to: (1) expand the scope of the study across academic programs or institutions to obtain a more representative picture; (2) use a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative data with quantitative surveys to measure the strength of relationships between variables more precisely; (3) examine more specifically the influence of gender differences and socioeconomic background on students' motivation patterns in completing their theses; and (4) investigate the

effectiveness of interpersonal communication training models for academic advisors as a structured institutional intervention.

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