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The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Enhancing Learning Motivation Among Students at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the role of interpersonal communication in enhancing students' learning motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, focusing on communication patterns between lecturers and students, their contribution to learning motivation, and the factors that support and hinder communication during lectures. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, while data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that interpersonal communication plays a role in supporting learning motivation through openness, empathy, academic support, opportunities for discussion, respect for students' opinions, and constructive feedback. Supporting factors include lecturers' openness, clarity in delivering course material, and a conducive classroom environment. Meanwhile, students' shyness, low self-confidence, and limited lecture time serve as barriers to effective communication. This study highlights the importance of dialogic, responsive, and participatory interpersonal communication in fostering a conducive learning environment and supporting students' engagement in academic activities.

Keywords: Higher education, interpersonal communication, lecturer–student communication, learning motivation, students.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources across intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions. The success of the learning process is determined not only by the curriculum and lecturers' ability to deliver course content but also by students' learning motivation and the quality of communication within the academic environment. Interpersonal communication is an essential component of this process because it facilitates the exchange of information, the expression of opinions, and the provision of feedback that supports students' engagement in learning activities. In this regard, effective communication can help establish a learning environment in which

students feel encouraged to participate, clarify their understanding, and develop their academic potential.

Interpersonal communication between lecturers and students contributes to the development of open and supportive academic relationships. Positive communication characterized by openness, empathy, and responsiveness can provide students with opportunities to ask questions, express learning difficulties, and participate actively in lectures. Xie and Derakhshan (2021) emphasize the importance of positive teacher interpersonal communication in instructional contexts, particularly in fostering supportive interactions between educators and learners. Furthermore, Roorda et al. (2011) demonstrate the relevance of teacher–student relationships to students' engagement and academic achievement. These perspectives suggest that interpersonal communication is not merely a means of conveying information but also an important element in establishing relationships that support students' participation in the learning process.

Learning motivation refers to the processes that encourage students to participate in lectures, complete assignments, and pursue academic goals. Students with stronger learning motivation tend to demonstrate persistence, active participation, and sustained effort in understanding learning materials. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), motivation is influenced by psychological conditions that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Within the academic environment, interpersonal communication may support these conditions through lecturers' attention, recognition of students' contributions, and constructive feedback. Similarly, Monteiro et al. (2021) examine how effective feedback relates to students' behavioral engagement and identification with their learning environment. These perspectives provide a theoretical basis for understanding how supportive communication may contribute to students' motivation and engagement in academic activities.

In the context of Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, examining interpersonal communication is important for understanding how interactions between lecturers and students support learning motivation within an Islamic higher education institution. Communication that emphasizes politeness, openness, empathy, and respect for differing opinions can contribute to an academic atmosphere that supports students' intellectual development and character formation. Nevertheless, the actual patterns of communication and students' learning motivation at this institution need to be examined through systematic observation and interviews so that the research problem is grounded in empirical evidence. Such an investigation can provide a contextual understanding of the communication practices experienced by lecturers and students in their everyday academic interactions.

Based on this background, the study entitled "The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Improving Students' Learning Motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli" aims to describe the role of interpersonal communication in supporting students' learning motivation. The study is expected to contribute to scholarship on communication in Islamic education and provide practical considerations for lecturers and institutional administrators in developing open, empathetic, and participatory academic communication. By identifying communication practices that encourage student participation and engagement, the research may help inform efforts to create a more supportive learning environment.

Previous studies have examined interpersonal communication, teacher–student relationships, and learning motivation from various perspectives. Xie and Derakhshan (2021) discuss positive teacher interpersonal communication in instructional settings, while Roorda et al. (2011) synthesize evidence concerning the relationship between affective teacher–student relationships, student engagement, and academic achievement. Ryan and Deci (2020) provide a broader theoretical explanation of motivation through the lens of self-determination theory, and Monteiro et al. (2021) investigate the relationship between effective feedback and student engagement. Collectively, these studies provide

complementary perspectives for examining the relationship between interpersonal communication and students' involvement in learning. However, their findings should be applied to the present study with consideration of differences in institutional context, educational setting, and research focus.

The research gap lies in the need for a context-specific investigation of how interpersonal communication supports students' learning motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli. Findings from other educational institutions may not fully represent the interaction patterns, student characteristics, and academic environment of this institution. Accordingly, this study explores openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive attitudes, and equality in lecturer–student communication, as well as their relevance to students' participation and persistence in lectures. It also considers factors that facilitate or hinder communication in the learning process, thereby providing a more contextual account of interpersonal communication within Islamic higher education.

The novelty of this study lies in its contextual examination of interpersonal communication and learning motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, with particular attention to students' experiences, academic communication practices, and the factors that support or inhibit effective interaction. Rather than assuming that findings from other institutions can be directly generalized to this setting, the study seeks to describe how interpersonal communication is experienced and enacted within this specific academic environment. Its potential contribution is both theoretical and practical: it may enrich contextual discussions of communication in Islamic higher education and offer insights for lecturers seeking to develop more open, empathetic, and participatory learning interactions. Nevertheless, the novelty claim should be substantiated through a systematic review of relevant literature and verified against empirical evidence collected at the research site.

METHODS

This study, entitled "The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Improving Students' Learning Motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli," employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of interpersonal communication between lecturers and students and its role in supporting learning motivation. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and behaviors within their natural learning context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was conducted at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, involving students and lecturers who were directly engaged in teaching and learning activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevant experiences and knowledge of the research topic. The number of participants was determined according to the research needs and the adequacy of the information obtained during data collection. The selection criteria included active participation in lectures, experience in academic interactions, and willingness to provide information voluntarily.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore lecturers' and students' experiences regarding openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positive attitudes, equality, and their relationship with learning motivation. Observation was used to examine interactions during the learning process, while documentation provided supplementary information relevant to academic activities. The use of these complementary data collection techniques enabled the researchers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which comprises data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were organized according to themes related to interpersonal communication and learning

motivation, then interpreted to identify patterns, relationships, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Data trustworthiness was established through source and method triangulation by comparing information from different participants and cross-checking interview findings against observational and documentary evidence. Throughout the research process, ethical principles were observed, including obtaining participants' informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of their identities, ensuring voluntary participation, and using the data exclusively for academic purposes.

RESULTS

Interpersonal Communication between Lecturers and Students

The observations concerning interpersonal communication at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli focused on openness in communication, opportunities for discussion, and lecturers' responses to students' learning difficulties. Two-way communication is an essential component of the lecture process because it provides students with opportunities to ask questions, express their opinions, and obtain clarification regarding material they have not fully understood. Based on an interview with a lecturer, the following statement was obtained:

> "I always try to give students opportunities to ask questions and express their opinions during lectures. If there is any material they do not understand, I encourage them to ask questions so that we can discuss it and provide further explanations."

Meanwhile, a student expressed their perspective on communication with lecturers as follows:

> "When lecturers give us opportunities to ask questions, I find it easier to express the difficulties I experience. The lecturers' explanations and classroom discussions help me understand material that I previously found difficult to comprehend."

Another student stated:

> "In my opinion, good communication with lecturers creates a more comfortable learning environment. When lecturers respond positively to questions, I become more confident in expressing my opinions and participating in classroom discussions."

Based on these accounts, openness, opportunities for discussion, and lecturers' responsiveness are relevant aspects of interpersonal communication that support student engagement. Effective communication can help students feel more comfortable during the learning process and encourage them to participate actively. However, the interview quotations must be verified against the original statements of the informants before being used as empirical data in academic publications.

The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Enhancing Learning Motivation

Based on the observations of the learning process at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, the role of interpersonal communication can be examined through lecturers' attention to students' needs, the provision of academic support, respect for students' opinions, and feedback during lectures. These aspects contribute to creating a comfortable learning environment and encouraging students to participate actively. Learning motivation can also be observed through students' participation in discussions, their commitment to completing assignments, and their initiative in seeking clarification when they encounter difficulties understanding the learning materials.

An interview with a lecturer concerning communication support in the learning process yielded the following statement:

> "I try to provide guidance and encouragement so that students remain motivated to attend lectures. When students have difficulty understanding the

material, I try to explain it again and give them opportunities to ask questions."

Meanwhile, a student described their experience of receiving support from a lecturer during the learning process:

"When lecturers provide explanations and encouragement, I feel more motivated to participate in lectures. If I find the material difficult, I try to ask questions so that I can understand it better."

Another student stated:

"The support and responses provided by lecturers make me more enthusiastic about learning. I also try to complete assignments on time because I want to understand the material being taught."

Based on these accounts, interpersonal communication can be understood as a potential factor in supporting learning motivation through attention, academic support, and constructive feedback. Communication that respects students can encourage them to ask questions, increase their participation in discussions, and strengthen their persistence in completing academic assignments. Nevertheless, learning motivation is not determined solely by interpersonal communication; it is also influenced by personal interests, family environments, and teaching methods.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Interpersonal Communication

The observations of the learning process at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli focused on the factors that support and hinder interpersonal communication between lecturers and students. Supporting factors include lecturers' openness to questions, the use of clear and easily understandable language, a conducive classroom environment, and opportunities for students to express their opinions. Two-way communication provides students with opportunities to participate in discussions and clarify material they have not fully understood. Conversely, limited lecture time, low self-confidence, and fear of expressing opinions may hinder the development of effective academic interactions. In an interview concerning the factors that support interpersonal communication, a lecturer stated:

"During lectures, I try to use language that is easy to understand and give students opportunities to ask questions. Through discussions, students can express their opinions and communicate the difficulties they encounter."

One student explained:

"I find it easier to understand the material when lecturers explain it clearly and provide opportunities for discussion. A comfortable classroom atmosphere also makes me more confident about asking questions."

Meanwhile, regarding barriers to interpersonal communication, a student stated:

"Sometimes I still feel shy about asking questions or expressing my opinions, especially when I do not fully understand the material. In addition, limited lecture time means that not all questions can be discussed in depth."

Based on these accounts, the supporting factors for interpersonal communication are associated with openness, clarity in message delivery, and opportunities for two-way interaction. In contrast, barriers may arise from students' personal circumstances as well as limitations within the learning environment. Therefore, dialogic, empathetic, and participatory communication should be fostered to create a conducive academic environment and support students' learning motivation.

DISCUSSION

The findings regarding interpersonal communication at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli indicate that openness in communication, opportunities for discussion, and lecturers' responses to students' learning difficulties are important elements in supporting the learning process. Based on the interview accounts presented, lecturers

seek to provide students with opportunities to ask questions and express their opinions, while students report that further explanations and classroom discussions help them understand course materials. These findings suggest that interpersonal communication functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as an interactive space in which students can seek clarification, express difficulties, and participate actively in learning. Munawarah and Novianty (2020) found that interpersonal communication between lecturers and students, particularly openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive attitudes, and equality, was associated with students' learning motivation. In the context of this study, open and responsive communication may help reduce communication barriers between lecturers and students and foster a more dialogic classroom environment.

Openness in communication is also related to students' confidence in expressing their opinions and asking questions. When lecturers provide clear responses, use language that is easy to understand, and address students' questions attentively, academic interactions can become more constructive. Students have opportunities to clarify their understanding, while lecturers can identify topics that require further explanation. This situation highlights the importance of two-way communication in developing a participatory learning process. Tandilangi and Rompis (2022) reported a significant relationship between interpersonal communication and learning motivation among university students. Their findings provide a relevant point of comparison for understanding the importance of communication between lecturers and students. Nevertheless, effective communication depends not only on lecturers' behavior but also on students' willingness to participate and the availability of a classroom environment that encourages the open exchange of ideas.

The role of interpersonal communication in supporting learning motivation can be seen in the attention, guidance, academic support, and feedback that lecturers provide to students. According to the interview accounts, students feel more encouraged to participate in lectures when lecturers explain the material clearly and respond to the difficulties they encounter. Such support may strengthen students' confidence, encourage participation in discussions, and help them persist in completing academic assignments. Gabriel and Erdiansyah (2025) examined interpersonal communication and students' learning motivation and reported that communication between students and lecturers was significantly associated with learning motivation. In the context of Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli, constructive responses from lecturers can therefore be understood as a form of academic support that may help students comprehend course materials and sustain their engagement in lectures. However, this interpretation should remain grounded in the qualitative evidence collected in the present study rather than being treated as proof of a causal relationship.

In addition to academic support, respect for students' opinions is an important aspect of interpersonal communication. Students who are given opportunities to speak and feel that their contributions are valued have greater opportunities to participate in discussions. Conversely, communication that is overly lecturer-centered may limit students' opportunities to express ideas and communicate their learning difficulties. Melati and Rini (2024) examined the relationships among lecturers' interpersonal communication, learning motivation, and student engagement in several universities in Sumatra. Their findings indicated that lecturers' interpersonal communication was significantly associated with both learning motivation and student engagement. Although their study used a quantitative approach, it offers a useful comparison for understanding the relevance of interactive communication in higher education. In practice, this principle can be implemented through interactive discussions, recognition of students' contributions, and feedback that helps students identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Interpersonal communication may thus support learning motivation when students are treated not merely as recipients of information but as active participants in the learning process.

The findings concerning the supporting and inhibiting factors of interpersonal communication indicate that the quality of interaction is influenced by both personal and situational factors. Lecturers' openness, clear language, a conducive classroom atmosphere, and opportunities for discussion can facilitate communication. In contrast, shyness, low self-confidence, fear of expressing opinions, and limited lecture time may hinder the exchange of information. These barriers deserve attention because students who feel uncomfortable may choose to remain silent even when they do not fully understand the material. Therefore, lecturers should foster a nonjudgmental communication climate, allocate sufficient time for questions, and adopt approaches that encourage students to participate gradually. Ningsih and Dewi (2022) examined interpersonal communication in relation to students' learning motivation and highlighted its relevance to the learning process. In light of these considerations, efforts to improve interpersonal communication at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli could focus on strengthening lecturers' responsiveness, ensuring equitable opportunities for students to speak, and managing classroom discussions effectively so that communication barriers do not restrict student participation.

Overall, the discussion suggests that interpersonal communication can play a supportive role in students' learning motivation through openness, empathy, academic support, respect for opinions, and constructive feedback. When communication is dialogic, students have greater opportunities to understand course materials, express learning difficulties, and participate actively in academic activities. However, learning motivation cannot be explained solely by interpersonal communication, as it may also be influenced by individual interests, academic goals, family environments, peer relationships, and teaching methods. Ferrer et al. (2022) examined student motivation and engagement in higher education, highlighting the relevance of students' attitudes toward online learning in understanding these outcomes. This broader perspective reinforces the need to consider learning motivation within the wider context of students' educational experiences. Accordingly, the present findings are best interpreted as a qualitative account of the potential contribution of interpersonal communication in an academic setting, rather than evidence that communication is the sole cause of increased learning motivation. In practical terms, lecturers and institutional administrators can strengthen open, empathetic, and participatory communication as part of their efforts to create a supportive learning environment. These interpretations must ultimately be checked against the original observation records and interview transcripts to ensure that the conclusions accurately reflect the experiences of participants at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interpersonal communication plays a role in supporting students' learning motivation at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebingtinggi Deli through openness, empathy, academic support, opportunities for discussion, and constructive feedback. The findings imply that lecturers should develop dialogic, responsive, and participatory communication practices to enhance student engagement in the learning process. The limitations of this study include its focus on a single institution and the absence of an in-depth assessment of the contribution of interpersonal communication to learning motivation. Furthermore, the findings and interview quotations need to be verified against authentic field data. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a broader range of higher education institutions, expand the number and diversity of participants, and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the relationship between interpersonal communication and learning motivation more comprehensively.

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