

The Dynamics of Communication between Lecturers and Students in Final Guidance: A Study at UIN Palopo

Nurul Ramadhan¹, Abdul Pirol², and Sukirman³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia

*nurulramadhan@gmail.iainpalopo.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the dynamics of communication between supervisors and students in the context of final project guidance at the State Islamic University (UIN) Palopo. The focus of the research includes three main aspects, namely the ongoing interpersonal communication styles, the effectiveness of the communication media used, and the factors that hinder the smoothness of the guidance interaction. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. The research informants consisted of final-year students from the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program, Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah. The supervising lecturers were selected based on their involvement in the thesis supervision process, while the students were final-year students who are currently undergoing or have completed the thesis supervision process. The research results show that interpersonal communication between supervisors and students occurs through three dominant communication styles, namely supportive, directive, and collaborative. The collaborative style is considered the most effective because it can balance academic needs with positive interpersonal relationships. The use of communication media, both face-to-face and online such as WhatsApp and Sevima, contributes to time efficiency and flexibility in the mentoring process, although online communication has not yet fully replaced the richness of nonverbal messages in face-to-face communication. Factors hindering guidance interactions include psychological, communication, technical, as well as academic system and workload factors. This study concludes that the effectiveness of thesis supervision is greatly influenced by the ability of supervisors and students to build open, collaborative, responsive, and respectful communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world of education cannot be separated from the process of communication, whether it occurs verbally or nonverbally. Communication generally serves as an informative, educational, persuasive, and recreational medium, while also being a means of fostering individual maturity and independence in community life (Ummah, 2019). In the context of higher education, the preparation of a final thesis or dissertation is one of the most crucial academic stages for students, as it demands critical, analytical, and methodological thinking skills. The process does not take place independently, but rather through intensive guidance interactions with the supervising lecturer as a facilitator, director, and academic partner. The quality of communication in the guidance interaction greatly determines the smoothness, effectiveness, and success of thesis preparation. Lecturers who actively communicate with students are better able to identify the potential, needs, and challenges faced by students, thus providing more relevant guidance (Syafrian, 2025). With the advancement of technology, guidance interactions no longer take place entirely face-to-face, but are largely

conducted through online communication media such as instant messaging applications and digital academic platforms. This change in interaction patterns has implications for communication styles, the intensity of guidance, and the interpersonal relationships between supervisors and students. Various issues are still often encountered in the final guidance practice, such as differences in perception between lecturers and students, delayed responses, inaccurate feedback, and psychological pressure on students. Several previous studies have examined communication between lecturers and students in the academic context (Jaya & Peranginangin, 2022; Bakar, 2015), but most still place guidance communication as a supporting variable and emphasize structural-administrative aspects, such as academic procedures and completion duration, rather than the dynamics of interpersonal communication itself. Research gaps are also evident in the lack of studies specifically examining the dynamics of guidance communication in the context of using online media as the main interaction space.

Although studies on interpersonal communication in the academic guidance process have been extensively conducted, research specifically examining the dynamics of communication between supervisors and students in final project guidance within the context of Islamic religious universities is still relatively limited. Previous research tends to discuss the effectiveness of communication, student satisfaction, or guidance obstacles separately, so there has not been much integration of interpersonal communication styles, the use of communication media, and interaction hindrance factors in a single comprehensive study. In addition, the change in academic communication patterns through the use of digital media such as WhatsApp and Sevima introduces new dynamics in the mentoring process that need to be understood not only from the aspect of efficiency but also from the quality of the interpersonal relationships formed. Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in the effort to comprehensively analyze the dynamics of communication between supervisors and students by connecting three dimensions: interpersonal communication styles, the effectiveness of communication media, and factors that hinder interaction in the final project guidance process. This research also provides empirical context to the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program, Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah, UIN Palopo, thereby illustrating how the characteristics of the academic environment and the use of digital communication media influence the relationship patterns between supervisors and students. Thus, this research not only describes the communication process in final project guidance but also explains how these communication patterns contribute to the creation of an effective, open, and collaborative guidance process. Based on the description, this research is focused on answering three issues, namely: (1) how the interpersonal communication style occurs between the supervising lecturer and students in the final guidance interaction; (2) how effective the use of communication media is in that guidance interaction; and (3) what factors potentially hinder the smoothness of the guidance interaction between students and the supervising lecturer. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of academic interpersonal communication studies, as well as practical contributions for lecturers, students, and institutions in improving the quality of the final project guidance process in higher education.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, which aims to describe and deeply understand the social situation being studied through data in the form of written or spoken words, not numbers (Moleong; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The qualitative descriptive approach is used to gain a deep understanding of the communication dynamics between supervisors and students in the final project guidance process at the State Islamic University (UIN) Palopo. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on experiences, interaction patterns,

communication styles, the use of communication media, and factors that hinder the guidance process occurring in a natural context. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling technique (Ahmad, M., & Wilkins, S., 2024), not random sampling. The purposive sampling technique was chosen because informants were determined based on specific considerations that align with the research objectives and are deemed capable of providing relevant and in-depth information. The research informants consist of supervising lecturers involved in the thesis guidance process and final-year students of the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program, Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Dakwah, UIN Palopo, who are currently undergoing or have completed the thesis guidance process. With this technique, the researcher can select informants who have direct experience with communication in the guidance process.

Research data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to explore the experiences and views of supervisors and students regarding the communication patterns that occur during guidance. Non-participant observation was conducted to observe the interaction process without the direct involvement of the researcher in the guidance activities. Documentation is used as supporting data, such as notes or documents related to the guidance process. The data obtained is then analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data is examined through source and technique triangulation to enhance the credibility of the research findings..

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpersonal Communication Style between Supervising Lecturers and Students

The results of interviews and observations indicate that there is no standardized communication strategy uniformly applied by supervising lecturers. Nevertheless, the lecturers generally continue to inquire about the progress of the students' theses and provide space for students to present their arguments, as long as those arguments are based on theory and relevant to the discussion topic. The process of guidance communication is two-way, which is an important prerequisite for the guidance to proceed smoothly. In general, three dominant patterns of interpersonal communication styles were found, namely supportive, directive, and collaborative styles. All three represent variations in the lecturers' approaches to delivering instructions, providing feedback, and responding to both academic and non-academic issues faced by students (Jaya & Peranginangin, 2022). The supportive communication style is characterized by the lecturer's open, empathetic attitude and psychological support, making students feel more confident and motivated. This style aligns with Joseph DeVito's view that effective interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, and equality of roles between the communicator and the communicant. The directive communication style, on the other hand, emphasizes clear and structured instructions with a focus on methodological precision; this style effectively accelerates the technical completion of writing, but it has the potential to create psychological distance because communication tends to be one-way. The collaborative communication style is a blend of the two approaches, where the lecturer acts as a facilitator who opens up a space for dialog while still providing firm scientific guidance, allowing both the lecturer and students to engage actively and equally. Of the three styles, the collaborative style is considered the most effective in building a harmonious and productive mentoring dynamic, as it aligns the structural-scientific academic needs with the formation of positive interpersonal relationships. Through this style, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and intellectual independence, while lecturers no longer position themselves merely as instructors, but rather as academic partners. Several factors were found to influence the choice of communication style by

lecturers, namely the personal character of the lecturers and students, the lecturers' experience in supervising theses, the communication media used, and the context of the supervision situation (formal or informal). These findings are in line with Mailani's (2022) research on interpersonal communication between students and supervising lecturers at UIN Suska Riau, which also identified supportive, directive, and collaborative styles in the thesis supervision process.

The Effectiveness of Using Communication Media in Guidance Interactions

The communication media used in the guidance process is divided into two main categories, namely face-to-face media and digital online media such as WhatsApp and Sevima. The research results show that face-to-face guidance is still considered the most effective by the majority of lecturers and students, as it allows for direct two-way interaction where verbal and non-verbal messages—facial expressions, voice intonation, and gestures—can be interpreted more accurately, while also strengthening emotional support between both parties. However, the effectiveness of face-to-face guidance is often hindered by the busy schedules of lecturers, time constraints, and differences in the location or residence of students. Online media such as WhatsApp, email, Sevima, and Google Docs become alternatives that facilitate the submission of revision documents, consultations without having to come to campus, and more flexible scheduling of guidance. For lecturers, this media helps monitor the progress of thesis writing efficiently and provides more systematic written feedback. However, the effectiveness of online media has limitations such as unstable internet connections, slow responses, potential misunderstandings of written messages, and reduced emotional closeness and nonverbal communication (Syafrian, 2025). The use of communication media has been proven to significantly affect the quality of interpersonal relationships between supervisors and students. In face-to-face media, the relationships formed tend to be more personal and emotional due to physical presence and direct dialog; conversely, in online media, the relationships are more functional and efficient, although the depth of interpersonal communication tends to decrease. The accuracy and speed of lecturers in responding, accompanied by a polite and open communication style through online media, can still build psychological closeness and create a conducive mentoring atmosphere. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of a communication medium is not solely determined by its technological characteristics, but also by how the medium is managed and utilized by the communicators, in line with McNair's view that media functions not only as a channel for message transmission but also as a medium for interaction and feedback.

Factors Hindering the Smoothness of Guidance Interaction

The research results identify four main categories of factors that hinder the smoothness of guidance interaction, namely psychological factors, communication factors, technical factors, and academic system and workload factors. Psychological factors include communication apprehension experienced by students—namely, fear or anxiety when having to communicate with lecturers in formal and evaluative situations (McCroskey)—as well as low self-confidence and limited experience in academic communication, which impact the delay in consultations. On the side of the lecturers, work pressure and administrative burdens also affect their patience and empathy in dealing with students. These findings align with Joseph DeVito's view that without openness and empathy, interpersonal communication tends to create a psychological distance between the communicator and the communicant. Communication factors are related to message misunderstandings, misaligned communication styles, and differences in perception, such as the use of academic terms that are difficult for students to understand or instructions that are conveyed too briefly. Technical factors include limited tutoring time, unstable internet connections, and difficulties accessing digital documents, which can potentially cause communication distortions and information delays,

especially in the implementation of online tutoring. The factors of the academic system and workload are related to the high number of students each lecturer supervises and the less flexible scheduling system for supervision at both the faculty and program levels, so the effectiveness of academic communication does not only depend on individual competence but also on the institutional context surrounding it. The four factors are interconnected and indicate that the obstacles in thesis supervision are multidimensional, so the improvement of guidance communication effectiveness needs to be carried out comprehensively by considering all these dimensions simultaneously.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the dynamics of communication between supervisors and students in final guidance interactions at the State Islamic University of Palopo are influenced not only by academic aspects but also by the quality of interpersonal communication established between both parties. First, three dominant communication styles were found in the guidance process, namely supportive, directive, and collaborative styles, with the collaborative style being deemed the most effective because it can balance academic needs and emotional relationships. Second, communication media—both face-to-face and online such as WhatsApp and Sevima—play an important role in supporting the smoothness of guidance, although their effectiveness is more determined by how these media are managed rather than by the technology itself. Third, obstacles in the guidance process can be categorized into four main factors, namely psychological, communication, technical, and academic system and workload factors, which are interrelated and affect the quality of interaction.

Overall, the effectiveness of the final guidance highly depends on the ability of supervisors and students to build open, collaborative, and respectful communication, supported by the use of appropriate communication media and a conducive academic environment. Supervisors are advised to apply more assertive, empathetic, and responsive communication; students are encouraged to improve their academic communication skills and manage communication anxiety; while institutions need to provide academic communication training, digital literacy, and an integrated mentoring system. Future research is expected to delve deeper into the influence of communication styles on student motivation and to compare the effectiveness of face-to-face and online communication using a more diverse research approach.

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