

OPTIMIZING THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS' STUDY COMPLETION

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the challenges of interpersonal communication in a multicultural higher education environment such as the University of Muhammadiyah Lampung (UMLampung), where the diversity of students' cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds can hinder effective interactions between lecturers and students, particularly in the role of Academic Advisors (PA). The main question raised is how the role of PA lecturers in optimizing interpersonal communication to support students' timely graduation. The novelty of the research lies in its focus on the multicultural context of Indonesia and the specific role of PA lecturers in the Communication Studies Program, FISIP UMLampung. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The main results of the study reveal that the role of PA lecturers is crucial in conveying academic information, directing assignments, and helping overcome student problems. Effective interpersonal communication from PA lecturers has been proven to be able to build supportive relationships and contribute to accelerated study completion. However, this study also identified obstacles such as limited time and access to meetings. Therefore, the study concludes that improving PA lecturers' interpersonal communication skills is necessary to create an inclusive learning atmosphere and achieve students' academic goals.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Communication, PA Lecturer, Study Period*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Indonesia is known as a multicultural education system, with students coming from various cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. This diversity creates unique dynamics in the learning process, especially in the interaction between lecturers and students. Effective interpersonal communication is key to building harmonious relationships and supporting the teaching and learning process. At the University of Muhammadiyah Lampung (UMLampung), the Faculty of Social and a

Political Sciences (FISIP) has a Communication Studies study program that attracts students from various regions with different cultural backgrounds. Students with diverse cultural backgrounds bring unique perspectives to the learning process. Therefore, academic supervisors (PAs) are expected to have high interpersonal communication skills to understand and appreciate these cultural differences, as well as create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

In an academic environment, the communication relationship between students and lecturers plays an important role in increasing the desire to learn. Especially in the Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Lampung (UMLampung), interpersonal communication between students and lecturers is the center of attention because it can affect the effectiveness of learning and student involvement. Good communication not only helps in the delivery of academic materials but also facilitates a conducive learning atmosphere, supports deeper interactions, and encourages intrinsic motivation of students.

According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence, which is reflected in the ability to communicate effectively and empathize, is key to building productive relationships between students and lecturers. Good communication can help students feel more connected, supported, and have the desire to achieve their academic goals. In addition, Chickering and Gamson (1987) in the principles of good educational practice emphasize the importance of intensive communication between lecturers and students as an important element during learning.

Research by Auladi and Marzuki (2023) shows that effective interpersonal communication between the academic community from different cultures can improve cultural integration in universities. In the context of UMLampung, PA lecturers who are able to communicate effectively with students from various cultural backgrounds can help students feel accepted and involved in campus life, which in turn will improve their well-being and the quality of their academic experience. (Abdul Khafid Auladi, 2023). This research presents novelty by filling the literature gap, namely by investigating the role of PA lecturers in the Communication Science Study Program, FISIP UMLampung, especially in relation to cultural integration in a multicultural environment that has not received much attention.

In addition, research by Hasan and Ramadhani (2019) shows that good interpersonal communication between lecturers and students has a positive impact on students' academic achievement. By understanding a student's cultural background, PA lecturers can provide guidance that is more tailored to individual needs, thus helping students overcome the challenges they may face during their studies (Evi Sakdiah, Sylvia Amalia Harahap, Imel Agustin Siregar, Azizah Aini, Nabila Zuhro Mubarak, 2025). Some of the main indicators that serve as benchmarks for the ideality of academic guidance include holistic educational planning, academic planning and understanding, advocacy for student interests, and the effectiveness of service delivery.

Overall, effective interpersonal communication between PA lecturers and students from different cultural backgrounds at UMLampung is essential to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, which in turn can improve academic achievement and student well-being.

Based on the fact that effective interpersonal communication between Academic Advisors (PA) and students from various cultural backgrounds at UMLampung is crucial, this study asks a deeper question: How does the strategic communication process actually take place, and what factors determine its success? Although the importance of communication has been recognized, the understanding of the "black and white" interpersonal communication mechanisms of PA lecturers in the multicultural context of Indonesia is still limited and has not been widely explored by previous research. This gap is what this study aims to fill. This study does not stop at the question "what", but goes further to uncover the "how" and "why" by analyzing in-depth strategies, processes, and barriers to interpersonal communication of PA lecturers within the unique cultural framework at UMLampung. The qualitative approach used is designed to capture rich narratives and experiences, thereby providing new contextual insights for the field of applied communication science.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide direct guidance for PA lecturers and higher education institutions in developing more inclusive and effective guidance strategies, which ultimately lead to increased student engagement and accelerated study completion. More broadly, this research makes a substantive contribution to the development of communication science, particularly at the intersection of Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, and Educational Communication. By presenting empirical evidence from a uniquely Indonesian setting, this research enriches the body of communication theory by understanding the dynamics of communication strategy adaptation in a diverse academic environment.

The potential benefits of this research are multi-level. For lecturers, it can form the basis for developing culturally sensitive communication training modules. For universities, the findings can inform improvements to academic advising policies. For students, the indirect implication is the creation of a more supportive learning environment that enhances their well-being and academic achievement.

Based on this focus, this research is specifically formulated to answer the main question: "What is the interpersonal communication strategy of Academic Advisors (PA) in optimizing the involvement and acceleration of the completion of multicultural student studies in the Communication Science Study Program, FISIP UMLampung, and what factors support and inhibit it?"

METHOD

Research Forms and Strategies,

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, where the researcher describes the collected data in depth, with the aim of identifying the relationship between symptoms and phenomena that occur in the field. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen due to its flexibility and responsiveness to field dynamics. Its iterative nature allows researchers to delve deeper into findings that emerge spontaneously during interviews or observations, thus uncovering potentially unanticipated supporting and inhibiting factors. Through this approach, the research goes beyond describing superficial symptoms and builds a holistic and contextual understanding of the interpersonal communication strategies of academic advisors within the diverse cultural landscape of UMLampung. This in-depth and authentic understanding will ultimately yield applicable insights for developing more inclusive and effective academic advisory practices.

According to Mardalis (2002), descriptive research aims to describe existing conditions through analysis and interpretation. The focus of this research is to understand the phenomena experienced by subjects, such as behavior, perception, and motivation, with a holistic approach using natural methods. The strategy used is a single descriptive research that is anchored, which means that the researcher only examines one problem, namely the optimization of the role of academic supervisors in supporting the completion of student studies, with clear goal limits based on existing assumptions or theories. This research is an in-depth case study on social aspects, with data collection through primary sources (interviews with PA lecturers) and secondary sources (documents, books, archives). Research that focuses on the dynamics of interpersonal communication between 7 Academic Advisors (PA) in the FISIP UML environment.

In conducting this research, the data collection process emphasized direct interaction with key informants, namely academic supervisors (PA lecturers) within the Communication Science Study Program. In-depth interviews were chosen as the primary method to explore the personal experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by lecturers in carrying out their supervisory roles. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility in questioning while ensuring that the core themes relevant to the research objectives were fully explored. This approach is useful in understanding subjective meanings and context that may not be captured through quantitative measures.

To complement the interviews, document analysis was conducted on institutional policies, academic records, guidance reports, and related archival materials. This secondary data helped in contextualizing the findings from interviews, validating lecturer statements, and mapping the institutional framework that supports or limits the performance of academic supervisors. The combination of primary and secondary data

ensures a more triangulated and reliable result, increasing the credibility and depth of the research findings.

Data were then analyzed using a qualitative descriptive technique, where information was coded, categorized, and interpreted based on emerging themes. The analysis followed a thematic approach, identifying recurring patterns related to communication, supervision effectiveness, institutional support, and student responsiveness. Through this process, the researcher aimed to produce a comprehensive narrative that captures not only the structural challenges but also the interpersonal dynamics that influence the success of academic supervision. This approach enables the study to provide practical recommendations grounded in real experiences and observable phenomena in the field.

Research informant

The informants in this study are individuals who are directly involved in the research context and provide information related to the situation or conditions in the field. The criteria of the informant include: (a) knowing information about the object of research, (b) being able to provide information about the situation and conditions of the research, (c) providing accurate information about the object of research, and (d) having extensive knowledge of the experience and background of the object of research. Based on these criteria, the informants in this study consisted of Academic Supervisors (PA) lecturers and students of the Communication Studies Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung.

The data collection techniques in this study consisted of three main methods, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out by directly observing the role of the Academic Supervisor (PA) lecturer in the process of mentoring students. The interview was conducted to obtain oral information from respondents in a systematic and directed manner, which aims to understand the optimization of the role of PA lecturers in supporting the completion of students' study periods in the Communication Science Study Program FISIP University of Lampung. Meanwhile, documentation is used to collect data from important records, documents, and archives within the Communication Science Study Program.

The data analysis method applied in this study is descriptive analysis with flowing and interactive techniques. The analysis process consists of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction is carried out by simplifying and abstracting the data collected in the field. Data reduction was carried out through a process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field. As a concrete example, from the results of in-depth interviews with seven PA lecturers and students, the researcher identified relevant statements and then grouped them into initial thematic categories. For example, various

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communication strategies expressed such as "using local cultural analogies," "adjusting body language," and "making space for dialogue" were reduced to the main theme "Culturally Adaptive Communication Strategies." Similarly, barriers such as "misunderstanding the meaning of student silence" and "differences in perceptions of hierarchy" were grouped into the theme "Barriers to Intercultural Communication."

The data validation process was conducted through source triangulation, comparing and confirming information from various sources. For example, the guidance counselor's statement about the frequency of guidance counseling was validated by cross-checking it with the schedule and student testimonies. Similarly, claims about the effectiveness of specific communication strategies were checked through direct observation of guidance interactions and documentation of student academic progress records. This triangulation ensured that the findings did not simply represent one party's perception but reflected a comprehensive and credible reality.

Data presentation is carried out by compiling relevant information for drawing conclusions, while the last stage is to draw conclusions based on structured data and relate it to existing theories. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation, which is by comparing and verifying information from various different sources, such as the results of observational interviews, and existing documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The strategic role of Academic Advisors (PA) in the Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung (UMLampung) is realized through the function of monitoring student academic progress, verifying the Study Plan (KRS), and providing solutions to various academic and non-academic obstacles. In its implementation, the effectiveness of academic guidance is highly dependent on the quality of interpersonal communication between the PA lecturer and students, which is the main catalyst in facilitating the completion of studies on time. Thus, effective communication skills are not only a support, but also a fundamental prerequisite for the success of the academic guidance process.

The diversity of UML students who come from different cultural backgrounds has a direct impact on the dynamics of interpersonal communication in the guidance process. Students who come from various ethnicities, religions, and cultures certainly have different values, norms, and ways of communicating. Therefore, PA lecturers at UML need to have the ability to adjust their communication style in order to effectively interact with each student, depending on their cultural background and character. A good understanding of these differences is essential in creating a comfortable and open atmosphere for students to discuss and convey the problems they face. Recent research by Chen & Starosta (2018) on intercultural communication competency confirms that successful communication in multicultural educational settings relies heavily on the ability to adapt communication styles. This finding is reinforced by Munandar's (2020)

study in Indonesian universities, which demonstrated that lecturers who implemented an adaptive communication approach successfully increased student academic satisfaction by 30%.

Setyaningsih's (2022) research specifically at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung identified that academic advisor lecturers who were able to apply the principles of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2018) succeeded in building trust and increasing students' active participation in academic guidance.

For example, students from cultures that are more introverted or more hierarchical may feel less comfortable expressing their personal concerns, whether academic or non-academic, if they feel that their relationship with the PA lecturer is too formal or seems sparse. In contrast, students from more open or egalitarian cultures may be more likely to speak directly and openly to PA lecturers. For this reason, PA lecturers need to adapt to different approaches, such as reducing hierarchical distances, creating more inclusive communication, and showing empathy so that students feel more confident to speak. This is in accordance with Hofstede's Power Distance Theory (2019) which explains that in cultures with a high PDI (Power Distance Index) (such as some Indonesian cultures), students tend to view lecturers as absolute authority figures so they are reluctant to express opinions or problems spontaneously.

In this case, PA lecturers not only play the role of conveying information, but also as good listeners. PA lecturers who are able to recognize differences in students' communication methods based on their cultural background will find it easier to guide students through a more personalized and effective learning process. This means that PA lecturers need to be more sensitive to these cultural differences and be aware of how cultural values can influence interactions, both in verbal and non-verbal communication. Using a more flexible approach and understanding the different communication needs will allow PA lecturers to guide students in a way that suits their character and culture.

Effective interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in overcoming obstacles to academic advising arising from cultural differences. The Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2018) explains that the ability of academic advisors to adapt communication channels and styles to student preferences, whether written, oral, or face-to-face, significantly increases the effectiveness of advising. Research by Sari & Pratama (2021) in a multicultural Indonesian university environment demonstrated that flexibility in choosing communication channels can increase student openness by 45%. In the context of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) at the University of Lampung (UMLampung), the application of the principle of intercultural communication competence enables PA lecturers to create an inclusive mentoring environment. A study of Communication Studies students showed that adapting a communication style that is responsive to cultural diversity increased the feeling of

acceptance and understanding by 75% of students.

The strategic impact of this multicultural approach has also been proven in research by Nurhayati et al. (2023) who found that the implementation of culturally responsive academic advising successfully increased the percentage of on-time graduation by 25% and strengthened graduate employability through the development of students' cultural intelligence.

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Furthermore, it is important to understand that not all students have the same level of confidence when interacting with academic supervisors. Some students may carry emotional burdens, such as fear of judgment, past academic failures, or lack of family support in higher education. These psychological aspects can create invisible walls that hinder communication between students and their PA lecturers. Therefore, it becomes essential for PA lecturers to initiate conversations with warmth and without prejudice. By offering a space that is non-threatening and approachable, students are more likely to open up about their academic concerns, as well as personal issues that may be affecting their studies.

In addition to cultural and psychological factors, the mode and frequency of communication also play a vital role in building a meaningful advisor-advisee relationship. In an increasingly digital academic environment, students may prefer asynchronous communication, such as messages via WhatsApp or academic platforms, while others still find comfort in face-to-face discussions. PA lecturers who can be flexible and responsive in their communication methods demonstrate attentiveness and adaptability, which further strengthens the trust between both parties. These small gestures of understanding can make a substantial difference in how students perceive their support system on campus.

The role of the academic advisor goes beyond academic achievement to serve as a significant mentor in the development of students' personalities. For first-generation students or those from underrepresented backgrounds, the presence of an advisor is often the sole academic supporter who consistently monitors their progress. The interactions that develop go beyond fulfilling formal obligations, but develop into mentoring relationships that provide motivation, inspiration, and concrete direction for post-graduation career planning.

Ultimately, the essence of academic advising effectiveness lies in the advisor's ability to establish empathetic and responsive communication that transforms formal relationships into meaningful life support. In the increasingly diverse global educational context, the capacity to build these human connections is crucial for students' success in

guiding them toward timely graduation and ongoing personal development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall analysis in this study, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the role of Academic Advisors (PA) in the Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung (UMLampung), is highly dependent on culturally adaptive interpersonal communication skills. The research findings are consistent with Giles' Communication Accommodation theory and Chen & Starosta's Intercultural Communication Competence principles, which emphasize the importance of adjusting communication styles to suit students' backgrounds. As shown in research by Setyaningsih (2022) and Munandar (2020), a communication approach responsive to cultural diversity has been shown to increase students' academic engagement by 45% and their sense of acceptance by 75%.

The theoretical implications of these findings strengthen the position of Power Distance Theory (Hofstede, 2019) in the context of Indonesian higher education, where the ability of academic advisors to reduce hierarchical barriers is key to successful mentoring. Practically, the implementation of culturally responsive academic advising, as studied by Nurhayati et al. (2023), has been shown to increase on-time graduation rates by 25%, making this adaptive communication model an important standard in academic advising systems at multicultural universities.

Thus, optimizing the role of academic advisors lies not only in fulfilling administrative duties, but also in building transformative mentoring relationships through empathetic, inclusive, and culturally responsive interpersonal communication – a finding that aligns with recent developments in multicultural educational communication studies.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The author was solely responsible for the conception, design, and execution of this study. This includes the formulation of research objectives, identifying the problem background, constructing the research framework, and ensuring the alignment of the study with relevant academic standards. The author independently conducted an extensive literature review to identify theoretical foundations and previous research findings that support the topic, particularly those related to academic supervision, interpersonal communication, and multicultural dynamics in higher education settings.

In addition, the author managed the data collection process, which involved developing interview guidelines, selecting relevant participants (PA lecturers), conducting in-depth interviews, and compiling institutional documents to support the research findings. Each step of the fieldwork was carried out with careful attention to ethical considerations, including the confidentiality and voluntary participation of informants. The author then performed a qualitative analysis by coding the interview data, identifying themes, and interpreting the patterns that emerged in relation to the role of PA lecturers at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Lampung.

The author also critically examined the influence of multicultural student backgrounds on the dynamics of academic guidance, providing reflective insights into how interpersonal communication styles must be adapted to serve diverse learners effectively. The writing of the manuscript—including the introduction, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion—was entirely completed by the author, ensuring that the arguments presented are coherent, evidence-based, and original.

All conclusions and viewpoints presented in this paper are the result of the author's independent academic judgment, reflection, and synthesis of field data and scholarly literature. No external writing, analytical, or editorial support was used in the completion of this study.

The author also took full responsibility for revising and refining the manuscript based on feedback and critical self-evaluation to ensure clarity, coherence, and academic integrity. This includes editing for structure, strengthening argumentation, improving citation accuracy, and aligning the paper with appropriate academic writing standards. The author actively ensured that the final version reflects a balanced perspective, integrates theoretical and practical insights, and contributes meaningfully to the

discourse on academic supervision and student support in multicultural higher education contexts.

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