Students' Interpersonal Communication in Building Closeness With Lecturers and Fellow Students in The Digital Era

Ratna Ekawati[1], Eko Prasetyo Nugroho Saputro [2], Gilang Jiwana Adikara [3], Anugerah Tesa Aulia[4], Arselma Trus'tee Audrey[5]
[1,2,3,4,5] Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
[1]ratnae@uny.ac.id, [2]ekoprasetyo@uny.ac.id,[3]gilang.ja@uny.ac.id, [4]anugerahtesaaulia@uny.ac.id, [5]arselma@uny.ac.id

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana komunikasi interpersonal mahasiswa Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta dalam membangun hubungan dengan dosen dan sesama mahasiswa, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi efektivitas komunikasi tersebut pada konteks tatap muka dan digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Informan penelitian adalah mahasiswa Ilmu Komunikasi angkatan 2022, 2023, dan 2024 yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik dengan triangulasi sumber untuk menjamin keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi tatap muka dipersepsikan lebih efektif dalam membangun keterbukaan, empati, dukungan, positivitas, dan kesetaraan karena adanya ekspresi nonverbal dan respons langsung. Sementara itu, komunikasi digital berperan sebagai pelengkap yang memberikan fleksibilitas dan kemudahan akses, terutama untuk pertukaran informasi akademik. Efektivitas komunikasi interpersonal dipengaruhi oleh kejelasan pesan, pemberian umpan balik yang konstruktif, penggunaan bahasa yang sopan dan kontekstual, kesetaraan relasional, empati, kedekatan emosional, waktu komunikasi, serta fleksibilitas dalam penggunaan media digital. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi komunikasi tatap muka dan digital untuk membangun relasi akademik yang efektif dan harmonis di perguruan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: komunikasi interpersonal, mahasiswa dan dosen, komunikasi digital, pendidikan tinggi, efektivitas komunikasi

Abstract
This study aims to examine how interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta contributes to building relationships with lecturers and peers, as well as to identify factors influencing its effectiveness in both face-to-face and digital contexts. This research employed a qualitative approach.The informants were Communication Science students from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis with source triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that face-to-face communication is perceived as more effective in fostering openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality due to the presence of nonverbal cues and immediate feedback. Digital communication, meanwhile, functions as a complementary medium that offers flexibility and accessibility, particularly for academic information exchange. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is influenced by message clarity, constructive feedback, appropriate and polite language use, relational equality, empathy, emotional closeness, timing, and flexibility in digital communication. This study highlights the importance of integrating face-to-face and digital communication to establish effective and harmonious academic relationships in higher education.

Keywords: interpersonal communication, student–lecturer interaction, digital communication, higher education, communication effectiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication is a crucial aspect in building effective relationships, both in academic and social environments. Interpersonal communication involves exchanges between two or more individuals, where information, feelings, and ideas are shared directly and personally. Unlike mass communication, which delivers messages to a broader audience without direct interaction, interpersonal communication is two-way, with each individual actively engaged in the communication process (Juliana & Erdiansyah, 2020). DeVito (2007) defines interpersonal communication as interactions between two individuals who have formed a relationship, highlighting its personal nature and the direct connection between people, whether in small

groups or one-on-one. This form of communication includes various interactions, such as those between parents and children, teachers and students, or friends (DeVito, 2007).

Interpersonal communication consists of several elements: the sender, the message, the communication channel, and the recipient. These components work together to ensure effective communication and the successful conveyance of intended meanings (Hsb & Yusniah, 2024). In higher education, this form of communication plays a vital role in interactions between students and lecturers and among students themselves, impacting not only academic exchanges but also emotional and social dynamics, which contribute to the overall learning experience. Studies show that quality interpersonal communication between lecturers and students positively influences student motivation and academic success (Pratama, 2017; Silviani et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication in higher education is linked to individual communication skills. Students who possess strong interpersonal communication skills tend to form positive relationships more easily with lecturers and peers, thereby improving their academic performance (Ariyani & Hadiani, 2020). These skills include active listening, providing constructive feedback, and empathetic communication (S et al., 2023). Furthermore, effective communication can alleviate the psychological stress students often experience, especially when working on major tasks like theses, as lecturers with strong communication skills provide essential emotional support (Silviani et al., 2023).

Higher education students are often faced with various challenges when interacting with lecturers and fellow students. The role of effective interpersonal communication becomes critical in forming and maintaining harmonious relationships (Tholia et al., 2022), improving academic success (Rahman et al. (2025), and enhancing better adaptation to technological changes (Anzari & Pratiwi, 2021). Moreover, research by Yeni and Susanti (2003) shows that interpersonal communication, in the context of higher education, not only serves as a tool for delivering information but also as a means to build positive relationships between lecturers and students, as well as among students themselves.

Juliana and Erdiansyah (2020) emphasize that interpersonal perception, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships significantly impact interactions. These factors shape how individuals view themselves and others, influencing the nature of their communication. In education, for example, effective communication between teachers and students is crucial for building positive relationships and creating an effective learning environment (Hsb & Yusniah, 2024).

With the advancement of digital technology, the way students communicate with lecturers and fellow students has undergone significant changes. The use of WhatsApp, social media, and email has opened new spaces for communication. However, despite the many conveniences offered by these technologies, questions arise as to whether digital communication can replace, strengthen, or even diminish the quality of traditional interpersonal communication conducted face-to-face.

Communication Science students, as individuals who study various theories and practices of communication, should have a deeper understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal communication, both in face-to-face and online contexts. However, despite being in a relevant study program, there is limited research specifically examining how Communication Science students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) build relationships with lecturers and fellow students in this digital era. The main issue is how students utilize digital technology to build supportive relationships, both in academic and social contexts.

DeVito (2007) identifies key elements in interpersonal communication, including:
a. **Source-Receiver**: Each individual serves as both the sender and receiver of messages, simultaneously transmitting and interpreting information.
b. **Encoding-Decoding**: Encoding (sending messages) and decoding (receiving messages) occur simultaneously in communication.
c. **Message**: The message acts as a signal received through various senses, such as hearing, sight, or touch.

d. **Media**: Media are the channels through which messages are transmitted, such as face-to-face communication, phone calls, or digital platforms.
e. **Noise**: Factors that can alter or hinder the understanding of the message.
f. **Context**: The physical, psychological, and social conditions that influence how messages are interpreted.
g. **Ethics**: The moral aspects of communication, ensuring that messages are truthful, fair, and aligned with accepted principles.
h. **Competence**: The ability to communicate effectively and engage in productive interactions.

DeVito (2009) outlines various goals of interpersonal communication, including learning, relating, helping, influencing, and playing. Effective interpersonal communication involves key characteristics, such as:

a. **Openness**: Willingness to respond honestly to information.
b. **Empathy**: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others.
c. **Supportiveness**: Providing descriptive, non-judgmental feedback and encouraging spontaneous communication.
d. **Positivity**: Maintaining a positive outlook to foster active participation and productive interaction.
e. **Equality**: Ensuring both parties feel valued and contribute equally to the conversation, fostering mutual respect and successful communication.

In the digital era, interpersonal communication among students has significantly changed with the rise of digital platforms facilitating interaction. This shift affects both student-lecturer and student-student relationships, with research highlighting that the ability to communicate effectively is essential for fostering productive relationships and supporting the learning process (Juliana & Erdiansyah, 2020; Yeni & Susanti, 2023). Effective communication also enhances students' social and emotional skills, which contribute to their future career development (Yolanda et al., 2021). However, challenges arise, particularly in the differing communication styles between digital natives (students) and older generations (lecturers), potentially creating gaps in interaction (Xuan & Kutty, 2022). Thus, lecturers must adapt their communication strategies to align with modern technological advancements.

This research aims to examine how interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at UNY helps build relationships with lecturers and fellow students. The study explores whether the digital media used by students in their daily interactions can help or hinder deeper interpersonal relationships between students and their lecturers, as well as between students themselves. Furthermore, this research will identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of such communication, such as comfort, accessibility, and trust. Based on these findings, it is expected that a better understanding will be gained of how Communication Science students can optimize their interpersonal communication in the digital era.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach aimed at exploring and deeply understanding the phenomenon of interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at UNY. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers the freedom to explore the subjective perspectives of the informants regarding interpersonal communication occurring in the academic environment, both in face-to-face interactions and through digital platforms.

The subjects of this study are active students from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts. The informants were selected purposively, considering criteria such as students actively engaged in interpersonal communication with lecturers and fellow students, both face-to-face and through WhatsApp and social media.

Data collection utilized in-depth interviews as the primary technique. It enabled the researchers to explore the perceptions, experiences, and views of the informants in greater detail regarding their interpersonal communication with lecturers and fellow students. Additionally, documentation in the form of digital conversations, such as communication in WhatsApp groups or social

media, was also gathered to delve into communication within the digital context. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analytical approach was chosen because it enabled the researcher to identify recurring or significant themes in the qualitative data obtained. Thematic analysis was carried out by coding the data according to categories relevant to the research objectives. Furthermore, to enhance the validity of the data, this study used triangulation of sources, which allowed the researchers to verify the results through the use of various data sources (among students as informants).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the results of research on interpersonal communication among students of the Communication Science Department at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) are discussed in depth, referring to two primary research questions: first, how students perform interpersonal communication with lecturers and peers; and second, what factors influence the effectiveness of this interpersonal communication?. The findings of this discussion are expected to provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of how interpersonal communication in academic settings, specifically in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at UNY, can foster harmonious and productive relationships. Furthermore, an understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of communication is expected to provide practical insights for students and lecturers to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships within educational environments. The data analysis in this study employs DeVito's (2009) theory of interpersonal communication, which asserts that effective interpersonal communication is characterized by several key traits, such as openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. The research findings are as follows:

1. Students' Interpersonal Communication with Lecturers and Peers

Effective interpersonal communication in higher education is a key element in establishing harmonious and productive relationships. Based on research conducted among Communication Science students at UNY from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts, interpersonal communication with lecturers and peers encompasses several key elements:

a. Openness

One informant (An) expressed that she feels more open during discussions with younger lecturers or peers. This is supported by the communication style of the lecturers at the Communication Science Department, which is informal and even encourages students to address them *"Mr/Miss"* reducing hierarchical distance as stated in the following interview excerpt:

> *"Some lecturers prefer to be addressed as Mr or Miss. This reduces the hierarchical gap between lecturers and students, allowing students to feel more comfortable and open in their interactions with them"*

However, she also mentioned challenges when communicating with senior lecturers due to differing views. In digital communication, she feels openness is often limited due to the potential for misinterpretation, as there is no expression or tone to observe.

Another informant Dz tends to limit her openness with lecturers due to the age gap and formal roles, thus being open primarily in academic contexts. In contrast, she finds it easier to be open with peers, both academically and personally. Similar to An, Dz feels more comfortable in face-to-face communication because it allows her to express herself directly without fear of misunderstanding as stated below:

> *"I am positioned as a student and they are positioned as lecturers. This distinction may explain why I feel more open when sharing with fellow students compared to when communicating with lecturers."*

Gr admitted that her openness with lecturers remains limited. She mainly communicates in academic contexts, especially regarding her involvement in organizations or social media teams. Face-to-face interactions with lecturers are relatively rare, and she feels more open with peers in both class and organizational settings. Gs explained as follows:

"As for lecturers, I am generally not very open. This is because my interactions with lecturers are usually limited to academic matters."

Nd explained that her openness with lecturers is mostly in the context of classes or academic guidance, such as discussions on theses or internships. She finds it easier to be open with lecturers as they provide clear information and structured guidance, making her feel comfortable asking questions and sharing views. In contrast, her openness with peers is more influenced by factors like age equality, major, and shared experiences. Nd stated as follows:

"Lecturers usually give clearer and more directed information. That is why, for matters like theses, PKM, internships, and academic issues, I am more open with lecturers because they can explain and guide me clearly."

b. Empathy

An emphasized the importance of sensitivity when communicating with lecturers, such as sending polite messages without being too demanding. Also, She explained that face-to-face communication makes it easier for her to read the emotional expressions of her conversation partner, enabling her to respond appropriately, such as with a hug or other non-verbal expressions. In digital communication, empathy is limited to the use of words or emoticons, which often do not reflect the true emotional state. An explained as follows:

"In face-to-face communication, we can express ourselves more fully, even through things like hugs. In digital communication, we rely on stickers or emojis, so the way we express emotions is more limited."

Dz highlighted that face-to-face communication makes it easier to understand others' feelings since one can observe facial expressions and body language. In digital communication, she needs to guess the intentions behind the writing style of the person she is talking to, making empathy harder to express. Empathy with peers tends to be more expressive, whereas with lecturers, it remains within formal boundaries as stated below:

"I think empathy is easier to build in

face-to-face communication because we can see expressions, body language, and tone. With lecturers, empathy is usually shown by using polite and formal language."

Gr observed that empathy in digital communication is constrained because text-based messages cannot convey tone of voice, facial expressions, or emotions, making it prone to misinterpretation, as stated below:

"I believe empathy is easier to build in face-to-face communication. Digital communication is more difficult because we cannot hear intonation or be sure whether their intended meaning matches our understanding."

However, she prefers digital communication because it makes her feel safer since she doesn't have to face the gaze or expressions of others directly. Despite this, she acknowledges the challenges that arise when there are differences in understanding during face-to-face communication, which require additional explanations.

c. Supportiveness

An feels that support is more substantial in face-to-face interactions, especially in academic mentoring contexts. Both lecturers and peers provide more encouragement, advice, and assistance in face-to-face communication. While digital communication still allows for support through messages, stickers, or video calls, it feels less natural and often delayed, as stated below:

"In face-to-face communication, lecturers can give guidance or encouragement directly, and academic discussions also feel more effective. In contrast, discussions through chat cannot match the immediacy and depth of in-person communication."

Dz believes that digital communication can offer support because it allows for quick interactions and helps lecturers recognize students. However, she emphasizes that face-to-face support is warmer, more natural, and personal because of the direct expressions, tone of voice, and simple gestures involved. Dz

explained:

> *"Digital communication is also very helpful, especially for long-distance contact or quick information exchange. So, both forms complement each other—face-to-face builds closeness, while digital communication offers convenience."*

Gr mentioned that feedback from both peers and lecturers varies in face-to-face and digital communication. In face-to-face interactions, especially during presentations or class discussions, she receives active attention, questions, and comments, while digital communication often has delayed or absent responses. She recognizes that digital communication is a supplement, but face-to-face interactions provide a stronger sense of support due to the direct engagement. Gr stated:

> *"Support feels stronger in face-to-face communication. When stressed about assignments, having a friend come and offer encouragement feels more calming, especially because their expression and tone make it more sincere. Digital messages still show support, but they often feel less impactful."*

Nd highlighted that support in interpersonal communication is more tangible in face-to-face interactions due to the directness of facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, which enhance the sense of being supported emotionally. However, digital communication does not always carry the same depth of support, as text messages or emojis cannot fully replace the emotional exchange found in face-to-face encounters. Nd explained:

> *"Face-to-face communication feels stronger to me because I can directly see the other person's emotions. In digital communication, I cannot see these cues, which makes the interaction more difficult."*

d. Positivity

DeVito (2009) emphasizes the importance of positive regard in interpersonal communication, which refers to accepting, respecting, and valuing both oneself and others during interactions. Based on interview data, positivity plays a significant role in building relationships with lecturers and peers in both face-to-face and digital communication.

Most students expressed that positivity is easier to feel in face-to-face communication than in digital communication. Informant Dz explained that face-to-face communication allows for broader and more relaxed conversations, which in turn enhances comfort and enjoyment in interactions.

> *"In face-to-face communication, the topic can flow freely, allowing for new information or ideas to emerge, whereas in digital communication, the conversation is more focused on the specific topic at hand."*

Similarly, Informant An added that face-to-face communication allows students to observe their conversation partner's facial expressions, making it easier to detect positivity.

> *"When communicating face-to-face, we can directly see how the other person responds, perhaps from their facial expressions. I feel more positive when communicating face-to-face."*

On the other hand, digital communication can still build positivity, especially if students have close relationships with their conversation partners. Informant Dz noted, *"With close friends, communication via chat flows more smoothly because of our strong connection."*

Positivity significantly impacts the success of communication. Students mentioned that positive communication environments make it easier to accept messages, increase comfort, and smoothen interactions. Informant 22Dz stated,

> *"In my opinion, a positive atmosphere in communication greatly influences communication success. Not everyone is always ready to receive information or listen to us, but with a positive atmosphere, the message will be easier to accept."*

Informant An emphasized that support from friends and lecturers reflected through positive interactions boosts self-confidence and encourages students to engage more actively in communication.

"From the feedback I received, it really gave me a boost to be more confident and step out of my comfort zone."

The analysis of the data shows that relationship closeness affects the experience of positivity, both in face-to-face and digital communication. Students with closer relationships with their conversation partners tend to feel more positive and connected. In contrast, communication with those they are less familiar with requires more effort to create a positive environment, especially in digital settings. Informant Mu explained as follows.

"If I'm not very close with someone, the conversation will just be average. But with close friends, the communication feels much warmer and more personal."

Positivity also contributes to creating effective communication in academic settings, both with lecturers and among peers. This is reflected in the ease of discussions, the comfort in receiving guidance, and the ability to share information openly. Students emphasized that through positive interactions, the conversation partner feels comfortable and enjoys the communication process. Informant Fi said, *"In face-to-face communication, positivity is more evident than in digital communication."*

In line with DeVito's framework (2009), positivity is an essential element in interpersonal communication among students. Face-to-face communication allows students to express and experience positivity more genuinely, while digital communication remains effective depending on relationship closeness and the method of message delivery. Positivity directly influences communication success, fostering connections, self-confidence, and comfort in academic interactions. Therefore, building and maintaining positivity is a key strategy for students to strengthen interpersonal relationships in the digital era.

e. Equality

Within DeVito's (2009) framework of interpersonal communication, *equality* refers to a principle of mutual respect in interaction, wherein both parties are regarded as equal,

without one perceiving themselves as superior or inferior. Based on interviews with Communication Science students from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts, it is evident that perceptions of equality in communication are shaped by several factors, including the platform used (face-to-face or digital), the communication context, and the ability to understand the interlocutor's condition.

Most students reported that face-to-face communication tends to foster greater equality compared to digital communication. Informant Ro expressed that direct interaction creates a more equal relationship because there are no restrictions in delivering messages: *"I feel more equal when talking or communicating directly."* In contrast, digital communication requires more careful adjustments such as selecting appropriate vocabulary and structuring messages which can affect the sense of equality. As Informant Ro elaborated:

"When communicating digitally, as I mentioned and as most students already know, there are certain patterns that must be maintained such as typing style, sentence structure and this often becomes an issue."

Conversely, Informant Gr indicated that while digital communication tends to offer more equality due to the symmetrical use of media, equality in face-to-face interactions can be more difficult to achieve because spontaneous reactions may not always meet expectations:

"Face-to-face communication is spontaneous, and I'm afraid that I might say something wrong or express emotions inappropriately toward the lecturer, which could be considered impolite."

For this reason, Informant Gr felt more comfortable communicating digitally, as it allows for more deliberate word choice and helps avoid misunderstandings commonly arising in face-to-face settings. She further explained that equality is more easily achieved in digital communication because users can adapt their communication style to the platform,

without relying on facial expressions or body language:

> *"Since we use the same media… For example, if my lecturer uses a selfie as a profile picture and I also use one, it feels like I'm talking to a friend."*

This indicates that the use of similar digital media can create a sense of equality between lecturers and students, something that may not occur in face-to-face communication, where differences in expression and nonverbal cues can heighten perceived inequality.

Equality in communication also contributes to an atmosphere of mutual respect. Informant Au emphasized that active listening and respecting the speaker's turn are crucial for maintaining equality, especially in digital interaction:

> *"Even in digital communication we shouldn't interrupt each other. That's part of communication ethics. We must listen until the speaker finishes and then respond."*

In face-to-face settings, equality is experienced through attentiveness to facial expressions and body language, as stated by Informant Ka: *"Face-to-face communication provides more personal interaction, while digital communication allows freedom of expression and flexibility."* Nevertheless, she noted that digital platforms foster equality because both parties have the same access to the communication medium, enabling them to express opinions without fear of judgment:

> *"Equality emerges because we can freely express our opinions without pressure. Sometimes in face-to-face conversations, we hesitate, thinking, 'What if what I say is inappropriate?'"*

In face-to-face communication, students can more clearly perceive whether their message is valued, as immediate reactions are observable. In digital settings, however, perceptions of respect often depend on response time and consistency. As Informant Gr noted: *"I look at whether the person continues the conversation or not, or whether they respond as quickly as I do."* This shows that although digital communication may promote equality in terms of access and expressive freedom, response timing also shapes perceptions of respect and relational balance.

Overall, the findings suggest that equality in interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at UNY is shaped by the communication context, the platform used, and the ability to understand the interlocutor's emotional state. Face-to-face communication is often perceived as fostering greater equality due to the presence of facial expressions and nonverbal cues that aid interpretation. However, digital communication can also create equality, particularly when both parties use similar media and reduce risks of misunderstanding through careful word choice. In both modalities, equality emerges when individuals listen attentively, respect each other's perspectives, and acknowledge the situational conditions of all participants—whether interacting directly or through digital platforms.

2. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication

Interviews with Communication Science students at UNY identified several factors that influence the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in academic settings, including message clarity, constructive feedback, language use, equality, and emotional closeness.

a. Clarity of Message

Message clarity is a crucial factor that influences the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. As stated by Informant Nd, *"What is certain is the clarity of the message, because we are communicating."* Clear articulation of intentions and objectives greatly assists the interlocutor in accurately understanding the message, whether in communication with lecturers or fellow students. This is essential to prevent communication from leading to confusion or even misinterpretation.

b. Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback plays a crucial role in refining and enhancing the quality of communication. Informant Nd stated that, *"Good feedback leads to better subsequent messages."* When feedback is delivered in a positive and supportive manner, it creates opportunities for improvement and elevates the quality of future interactions. Effective feedback facilitates clearer understanding and enables modification as well as further development within the communication process.

c. Language Used

The use of polite and context-appropriate language greatly influences the smoothness of communication. Informant Nd emphasized that *"using more courteous language facilitates communication between lecturers and students*, *as well as among students themselves"*. Using appropriate language helps prevent tension and ensures that conversations proceed smoothly. Moreover, employing well-constructed sentences and avoiding careless phrasing contributes to maintaining a respectful and mutually appreciative communicative atmosphere.

d. Equality in Communication

Equality in communication between lecturers and students is an important factor in fostering a harmonious and effective relationship. Informant An stated that communication with younger lecturers is easier to adjust to due to the smaller age gap and the more flexible use of media. Conversely, communication with more senior lecturers sometimes feels more rigid because of differences in communication styles and age distance. As expressed by Informant An, *"With younger lecturers it is easier to make adjustments."*

On the other hand, equality also emerges in communication among students when personal closeness facilitates smoother interactions. Informant An explained that *"personal closeness really affects communication,"* indicating that communication becomes more open and relaxed when interpersonal bonds exist. This is further supported by Informant Ro, who stated that *"with friends, communication is more relaxed because we are the same age and share the same goals, so it becomes more open and comfortable."*

e. Empathy and Understanding the Communication Partner's Situation

Empathy also influences the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. Informant Ro emphasized that *"the more we understand such matters, in my opinion, communication in general will be better."* Understanding the emotional state, timing, and situational context of the interlocutor greatly contributes to creating respectful and mutually considerate communication. This becomes particularly relevant in digital communication, where uncertainty regarding timing and responses often occurs. Nevertheless, sensitivity to each party's circumstances can significantly enhance the quality of communication.

f. Emotional Closeness and Interaction Frequency

Emotional closeness and the frequency of interaction also influence the effectiveness of communication among students. Informant Au stated, *"It depends on how close we are with fellow students,"* as such closeness enables communication to become easier and more open. When individuals feel emotionally connected to their interlocutors, they are more willing to share opinions and information. Conversely, when the relationship is not sufficiently close, communication tends to be limited, as expressed by Informant Au, who noted that communication becomes only as necessary.

g. Timing and Willingness to Communicate

The appropriate timing for communication also plays a significant role in determining its effectiveness. Informant Mu highlighted the importance of timing in interactions with lecturers, noting that *"time"* often becomes an inhibiting factor due to lecturers' busy schedules or unavailability for more intensive conversations. In addition,

identifying the right time is crucial in digital communication to ensure that exchanges proceed smoothly. This is reinforced by Informant La, who stated that *"communication must also be conducted actively… not merely left unattended while one is asleep."*

h. Flexibility in Digital Communication

Digital communication offers a high degree of flexibility, particularly in adjusting one's communicative style to different interlocutors. Informant Ka stated that *"digital communication allows freedom of expression and flexibility,"* indicating that in digital interactions, students have greater autonomy in choosing their words without external pressure. This flexibility enables students to tailor their communication style according to the platform used and the context encountered, such as when interacting with lecturers or peers.

The findings of this study demonstrate that interpersonal communication between Communication Science students, lecturers, and peers at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta is shaped by a complex interaction of communication context, media use, and individual relational factors. Drawing on DeVito's (2009) framework, this research confirms that openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality remain fundamental characteristics of effective interpersonal communication in higher education. However, the results also indicate that the effectiveness of these characteristics is significantly influenced by practical factors such as message clarity, feedback quality, language choice, emotional closeness, timing, and the flexibility afforded by digital communication platforms.

Face-to-face communication is consistently perceived as the most effective mode for fostering openness, empathy, and emotional support. Students reported feeling more comfortable expressing themselves directly when nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language are present. These cues help reduce ambiguity and facilitate clearer interpretation of messages, which aligns with the study's finding that message clarity is a crucial determinant of communication effectiveness. In face-to-face interactions, students can immediately assess whether their messages are understood and whether their contributions are valued, thereby minimizing misinterpretation and reinforcing relational trust. This supports DeVito's assertion that interpersonal communication is most effective when encoding and decoding occur simultaneously within a shared physical and emotional context.

Empathy emerged as another key factor closely associated with communication effectiveness, particularly in direct interactions. Students emphasized that understanding the emotional state and situational condition of their interlocutors—whether lecturers or peers—enhanced mutual respect and reduced communicative tension. The ability to observe emotional cues in face-to-face settings enables students to respond more sensitively, making communication feel more humane and supportive. In contrast, digital communication often limits empathetic expression due to the absence of intonation and visual cues, requiring students to rely on textual strategies such as emojis or carefully chosen words. While these tools partially compensate for emotional expression, they cannot fully replicate the depth of empathy conveyed through direct interaction.

Supportiveness in communication is also strongly influenced by the communication medium. The findings show that face-to-face communication provides a stronger sense of emotional and academic support, particularly in stressful academic situations such as completing assignments, theses, or internships. Encouragement delivered directly—through verbal reassurance or sincere tone—was perceived as more impactful than support conveyed through digital messages. Nevertheless, digital communication remains an important complementary medium, especially for maintaining ongoing academic coordination and providing quick responses. This dual role highlights that effective interpersonal communication in higher education does not rely exclusively on one medium but rather on the strategic integration of both face-to-face and digital interactions.

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is further shaped by the use of appropriate and polite language. Students emphasized that courteous, context-sensitive language fosters smoother communication and

prevents misunderstanding, particularly in lecturer–student interactions where role differences remain salient. This finding underscores the ethical dimension of interpersonal communication outlined by DeVito, in which respect and consideration form the foundation of productive interaction. In digital communication, careful language use becomes even more critical, as messages lack paralinguistic cues and are more susceptible to misinterpretation.

Equality in communication was found to be a dynamic and situational construct rather than a fixed condition. Face-to-face communication often reinforces hierarchical boundaries between lecturers and students, particularly with senior lecturers, which can limit students' openness. Conversely, digital communication sometimes reduces perceived power distance, as both parties interact through the same platform and visual markers such as profile pictures. However, this sense of equality in digital communication is contingent upon factors such as response time, consistency, and willingness to engage. Delayed responses or minimal engagement may undermine perceived respect and balance, indicating that equality in digital communication must be actively maintained through communicative responsiveness.

Emotional closeness and frequency of interaction also play a decisive role in communication effectiveness. Students reported that communication with peers or lecturers with whom they share closer relationships tends to be more open, positive, and supportive. When relational bonds are weak, communication becomes functional and limited to necessity, reducing opportunities for deeper interpersonal exchange. This finding reinforces the idea that effective interpersonal communication is relationally cumulative, developing over time through repeated interaction and shared experiences.

Finally, timing and flexibility emerged as critical enabling factors, particularly in digital communication. Students highlighted that choosing the appropriate time to communicate, especially with lecturers, greatly affects whether communication is perceived as respectful and effective. Digital platforms offer flexibility and convenience, allowing students to adjust their communication style and timing according to context. However, this flexibility requires active engagement and mutual responsiveness to prevent communication from becoming fragmented or ineffective.

In sum, this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at UNY is not determined solely by communication medium, but by a constellation of interrelated factors including message clarity, empathy, feedback quality, language use, equality, emotional closeness, timing, and communicative flexibility. While face-to-face communication remains superior in fostering emotional depth and relational trust, digital communication plays a vital supporting role in enhancing accessibility and efficiency. Effective interpersonal communication in higher education therefore depends on students' and lecturers' ability to adapt their communication strategies to context, medium, and relational dynamics, ensuring that mutual understanding and respect are sustained across both direct and mediated interactions.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that effective interpersonal communication among Communication Science students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta plays a crucial role in building constructive academic and social relationships with lecturers and peers. Based on DeVito's framework, the findings show that openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality are central to communication effectiveness. Face-to-face communication is perceived as more effective in fostering these dimensions due to the presence of nonverbal cues, emotional expressions, and immediate feedback, which enhance understanding, emotional closeness, and a sense of mutual respect. Such interactions are particularly valuable in academic guidance and emotional support contexts.

Nevertheless, digital communication serves as an important complementary medium by offering flexibility, accessibility, and efficiency, especially for information exchange and academic coordination. Its effectiveness, however, depends on factors such as message clarity, constructive feedback, appropriate

language use, emotional closeness, responsiveness, and sensitivity to timing and context. Therefore, students and lecturers are encouraged to develop adaptive communication strategies that integrate both face-to-face and digital modes. By fostering clarity, empathy, and respect across communication platforms, higher education institutions can promote more inclusive, supportive, and effective interpersonal relationships in academic settings. Finally, future research may expand this study by involving lecturers as informants, comparing communication patterns across different academic disciplines, or examining the long-term impact of digital communication on students' academic engagement and emotional well-being. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal communication dynamics in contemporary higher education.

REFERENCES

Anzari, P. P., & Pratiwi, S. S. (2021). What's missing? How interpersonal communication changes during online learning. *Asian Journal of University Education*, *17*(4), 148. https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v17i4.16213

Ariyani, E. D., & Hadiani, D. (2020). Keterampilan Komunikasi Interpersonal antar Mahasiswa dan Hubungannya dengan Capaian Prestasi Akademik. *JSHP (Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan)*, *4*(2). https://doi.org/10.32487/jshp.v4i2.849

Rahman, N., Cobb, H., Giddings, L., Truglia, M. H., Dolan, S., Jhangiani, S., & O'Connor, K. (2025). Context matters: Enhancing SOTL by exploring interpersonal relationship building in higher education. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry the ISSOTL Journal*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.13.23

DeVito, J. A. (2009). *Essentials of human communication (7th ed.)*. Pearson Education, Limited.

_____. (2007). *The Interpersonal Communication (11th ed.)*. Pearson Education, Limited.

Hsb, S. P., & Yusniah, N. (2024). Analisis Pola Komunikasi Interpersonal Guru dengan Siswa dalam Membentuk Kemandirian Siswa Tunagrahita di Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB C Karya Tulus). *Jurnal Indonesia Manajemen Informatika Dan Komunikasi*, *5*(2), 1879–1892. https://doi.org/10.35870/jimik.v5i2.826

Juliana, K., & Erdiansyah, R. (2020). Pengaruh Konsep Diri dan Self Disclosure Terhadap Kemampuan Komunikasi Interpersonal Mahasiswa. *Koneksi*, *4*(1), 29. https://doi.org/10.24912/kn.v4i1.6500

Pratama, R. A. (2017). Kualitas komunikasi interpersonal dosen dan motivasi mahasiswa dalam menulis skripsi. *Inter Komunika Jurnal Komunikasi*, *2*(2), 114. https://doi.org/10.33376/ik.v2i2.23

Silviani, W. R., Hastuti, H., & Fida, W. N. (2023). Hubungan komunikasi interpersonal dosen pembimbing mahasiswa terhadap tekanan psikologis dalam menyusun skripsi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi (JIKOM) STIKOM IMA*, *15*(01), 40. https://doi.org/10.38041/jikom1.v15i01.243

Tholia, S. N., Rastogi, M., Gupta, S. S., & Pandey, D. (2022). Role of interpersonal communication in workplace. *World Journal of English Language*, *12*(3), 64. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n3p64

Yeni, A., & Susanti, M. (2023b). Peran Komunikasi Interpersonal dan Kelompok dalam Konteks Pendidikan: Meningkatkan Keterampilan Komunikasi untuk Peningkatan Pembelajaran dan Prestasi Akademik. *Cognoscere Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media Pendidikan*, *1*(1), 19–27. https://doi.org/10.61292/cognoscere.v1i1.22

Xuan, N. Y., & Kutty, F. M. (2022). Potensi penggunaan media sosial terhadap kemahiran komunikasi interpersonal Guru Pelatih Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG). *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, *7*(3), e001375. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i3.1375

Yeni, A., & Susanti, M. (2023). Peran Komunikasi Interpersonal dan Kelompok dalam Konteks Pendidikan: Meningkatkan

Keterampilan Komunikasi untuk Peningkatan Pembelajaran dan Prestasi Akademik. *Cognoscere Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media Pendidikan*, *1*(1), 19–27. https://doi.org/10.61292/cognoscere.v1i1.22

Yolanda, W., Hadi, N. I., Permata, N. a. N., Widyaningrum, N. a. E., Susilowati, N. E., Jabarudin, N. I., Lusiana, N. N., & Andyarini, N. E. N. (2021). Self-Confidence and Self-Awareness and interpersonal communication and career development. *JPPP - Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengukuran Psikologi*, *10*(2), 100–106. https://doi.org/10.21009/jppp.102.05