



Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti

p-ISSN 2355-5106 || e-ISSN 2620-6641

<https://jurnal.citrabakti.ac.id/index.php/jil>



TEACHER INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND STUDENT LEARNING MOTIVATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY THROUGH THE LENS OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Raahiil Aysha Fawwaz^{1)*}, Nur Aeni²⁾

^{1,2)} Students of the Master's Program at Paramadina University, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: raahiil.aysha@students.paramadina.ac.id

Article History

Received:
May 20, 2026

Accepted:
July 22, 2026

Published:
August 27, 2026

Abstract

This study aims to outline the forms of teachers' interpersonal communication during the learning process in secondary school, investigate students' perceptions of such communication, and understand its impact on student learning motivation. The study employs a qualitative methodology with a descriptive-exploratory approach. It was conducted at MAN 21 Jakarta, involving 12 eleventh-grade students as subjects. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. The results indicate that teachers' interpersonal communication plays a central role in student learning motivation. Based on Self-Determination Theory, student learning motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are reflected in the quality of teacher-student interactions during the learning process. The findings reveal that open, supportive, and responsive communication from teachers can foster student learning engagement in ways that vary across different student groups (passive, moderately active, and active). For passive students, establishing relatedness is a crucial initial step; this is achieved through sympathetic and non-intimidating communication, allowing students to feel secure in their learning engagement.

Keywords: Teacher interpersonal communication, learning motivation, Self-Determination Theory, qualitative research, Islamic secondary school

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan bentuk-bentuk komunikasi interpersonal guru selama proses pembelajaran di sekolah menengah, menyelidiki persepsi siswa terhadap komunikasi tersebut, serta memahami dampaknya terhadap motivasi belajar siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-eksploratif. Studi ini dilaksanakan di MAN 21 Jakarta dengan melibatkan 12 siswa kelas sebelas sebagai subjek penelitian. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam menggunakan pedoman wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi interpersonal guru memegang peranan sentral dalam motivasi belajar siswa. Berdasarkan Teori Determinasi Diri, motivasi belajar siswa dipengaruhi oleh terpenuhinya tiga kebutuhan psikologis dasar otonomi, kompetensi, dan keterhubungan yang tercermin dalam kualitas interaksi guru-siswa selama proses pembelajaran. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa komunikasi yang terbuka, suportif, dan responsif dari guru dapat menumbuhkan keterlibatan belajar siswa dengan cara yang bervariasi pada kelompok siswa yang berbeda (pasif, cukup aktif, dan aktif). Bagi siswa pasif, membangun keterhubungan merupakan langkah awal yang krusial; hal ini dicapai melalui komunikasi yang simpatik dan tidak mengintimidasi, sehingga siswa merasa aman dalam keterlibatan belajar mereka.

Kata-kata Kunci : Komunikasi interpersonal guru, motivasi belajar, Teori Determinasi Diri, penelitian kualitatif, sekolah menengah Islam.

Background

Learning motivation is a critical determinant of educational success, as it affects student engagement, persistence, and academic performance. At the high school level, motivation for studying is paramount as students undergo a complicated phase of psychological development characterised by shifts in self-identity, a desire for social validation, and heightened emotional sensitivity. In these circumstances, the quality of social interactions within the school environment, especially the relationship between teachers and students, profoundly impacts students' learning experiences.

Nonetheless, the present educational landscape indicates that schools encounter not just academic difficulties but also increasingly intricate social dynamics and student conduct. The occurrences of bullying, verbal abuse, student altercations, and confrontations between educators and students signify a crisis in interpersonal communication within the educational setting. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), there were 329 complaints in the education sector throughout 2023, primarily concerning incidents of bullying and violence in schools (KPAI, 2024). The Indonesian Education Monitoring Network documented a rise in incidents of violence within educational environments, escalating from 285 in 2023 to 573 in 2024. This increase signifies that educational institutions have not yet adequately established a secure and nurturing environment conducive to students' psychological growth.

This condition directly affects pupils' motivation to learn. An unfavourable educational environment might diminish psychological safety, decrease academic engagement, and elicit a lack of enthusiasm in learning. In this environment, teacher interpersonal contact is essential, functioning not only as a method of conveying information but also as a tool for fostering social interactions that enhance the learning process. Educators who cultivate transparent,

sympathetic, and supportive communication are generally more effective in fostering a pleasant learning environment and enhancing students' intrinsic motivation (Wentzel, 2015).

The relationship between teacher interpersonal communication and learning motivation can be theoretically elucidated through Self-Determination Theory (SDT) established by Deci and Ryan. This theory posits that individual motivation flourishes when three fundamental psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In an educational setting, educators' interpersonal communication is vital for addressing these three demands. Educators who create avenues for pupils to articulate their viewpoints endorse the necessity for autonomy. Lucid elucidations and constructive critique can increase students' perception of competence. Teachers' empathy and nurturing dispositions might enhance the emotional bond between them and their students. This corresponds with symbolic interaction theory, which posits that social meaning is constructed through quotidian encounters (Blumer, 1986). In an educational setting, ongoing communication between educators and students influences students' impressions of the institution, the learning process, and their identities as learners. These impressions subsequently affect students' motivation and engagement in the educational process.

Numerous prior studies have demonstrated that teacher communication positively correlates with student motivation and learning engagement. According to Frymier & Houser (2015) established that supportive communication from teachers enhances student engagement and learning satisfaction. A study conducted by Xie & Derakhshan (2021) revealed that favourable interpersonal ties between educators and learners enhance intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. The teacher-student relationship theory suggested by Pianta et al. (2012) underscores that the quality of the emotional bond between educators and learners is a vital determinant of effective learning.

Nonetheless, investigations on teacher interpersonal communication and learning motivation continue to exhibit numerous shortcomings. Primarily, prior research has predominantly employed a quantitative methodology centred on quantifying variable correlations, so inadequately capturing students' subjective experiences in perceiving teacher interpersonal communication. Secondly, prior studies have predominantly focused on higher education or school environments in Western nations, rendering them less applicable to the social and cultural milieu of secondary schools in Indonesia. Third, the majority of studies have concentrated on the efficacy of communication in enhancing academic performance, although have neglected to investigate how teacher interpersonal communication influences students' perception of psychological safety and intrinsic motivation in the context of escalating social challenges within educational environments.

These constraints reveal a research gap that necessitates an in-depth investigation of students' perspectives about teacher interpersonal connection within the framework of daily school life. This research is significant as student learning motivation is affected by both academic variables and the quality of interpersonal ties established inside the school environment. This research is new in its emphasis on teacher interpersonal contact as a social and psychological phenomenon as perceived by students within Indonesian secondary schools. This research perceives communication as both a mechanism for transmitting knowledge and a means of cultivating students' sense of security, emotional connectivity, and intrinsic drive. Moreover, employing a qualitative approach offers a novel contribution to comprehending the intricacies of teacher-student relationships in a more contextual and profound manner, especially in light of the escalating occurrence of social relational crises within educational settings.

This research seeks to delineate the modalities of teacher interpersonal communication during the educational process in high schools, investigate students' perceptions of such communication, and comprehend the impact of teacher interpersonal communication on student learning motivation. The study aims to address the subsequent research enquiries: 1) What types of interpersonal communication between teachers occur during the learning process in secondary schools? 2) In what manner do students articulate their experiences regarding teacher interpersonal communication throughout educational activities? 3) In what ways does teacher interpersonal communication influence student learning motivation, as seen by students?.

Method

This study employed a qualitative methodology utilising an exploratory descriptive framework. Qualitative research employing an exploratory descriptive approach seeks to comprehend and articulate a social phenomenon thoroughly, grounded on the experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of participants within a natural setting. This methodology prioritises the systematic and contextual examination of social reality, enabling researchers to attain a thorough comprehension of the issue being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Doyle et al., 2020).

This methodology was selected to thoroughly comprehend students' subjective experiences about the interpretation of instructor interpersonal communication and its correlation with learning motivation. Employing a qualitative methodology enables researchers to thoroughly examine students' viewpoints, emotions, and interpretations within the authentic setting of classroom learning. The research site was a public high school, MAN 21 Jakarta. The research participants comprised 12 11th-grade students, based on specific characteristics

pertinent to the research aims. The selection of 11th-grade students was predicated on the premise that they possess substantial experience in teacher interactions, exhibit higher emotional maturity than 10th graders, and are subjected to less academic pressure than 12th graders. Respondents were classified into three categories based on their degree of learning engagement: (1) active students, (2) moderately active students, and (3) passive students, to acquire diverse experiences and viewpoints. Each group comprised four students, yielding a total of 12 respondents. This grouping sought to investigate variations in teachers' interpersonal communication experiences and their effects on learning motivation based on student characteristics.

Data collection was performed via in-depth interviews utilising a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide was constructed using indications of interpersonal communication and facets of learning motivation, grounded in the Self-Determination Theory, which includes the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Interviews were conducted in person and for a time adapted to the respondents' conditions, allowing researchers to acquire comprehensive and detailed data. Alongside the interviews, researchers documented field notes to record circumstances, expressions, and the contextual elements of interactions that arose during the data gathering procedure.

This study employed theme analysis as its data analysis technique, executed through multiple stages: data reduction, categorisation, and conclusion formulation. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and subsequently categorised to discern significant themes pertaining to teacher interpersonal communication and student learning motivation. The main themes were subsequently analysed via the Self-Determination Theory framework, specifically assessing how the requirements for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled through interactions between educators and students. This study employed source triangulation techniques to ensure data validity by comparing responses from respondents across several categories (active, moderate, and inactive). Furthermore, the researcher meticulously verified the interview data to ascertain the consistency and precision of the information gathered. This strategy aims to elucidate how students interpret teacher interpersonal communication and its influence on their learning motivation.

Each participant was interviewed for approximately 30–45 minutes, with a total of [one/two] interview sessions per participant. The interviews were conducted 2 month at the research site. Interviews were conducted individually in a quiet setting to provide participants with sufficient privacy and encourage them to express their experiences openly. The interview duration and number of sessions were adjusted when necessary to ensure that participants could provide sufficiently detailed responses without experiencing excessive burden. In addition to interviews, the researcher maintained field notes throughout the fieldwork period.

The field notes documented relevant contextual conditions, participants' expressions and responses, and other observations that could support interpretation of the interview data. The combination of interview transcripts and field notes provided contextual information for understanding students' experiences more comprehensively.

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved several stages, including data reduction, initial categorisation, identification of recurring patterns, development of themes, and formulation of conclusions. The emerging themes focused on teacher interpersonal communication and student learning motivation. The findings were subsequently interpreted using Self-Determination Theory, particularly the extent to which teacher-student interactions supported students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Source triangulation was employed by comparing responses among students from the active, moderately active, and passive engagement categories. This process enabled the researcher to identify convergent and divergent experiences across participant groups. The researcher also reviewed the interview transcripts and field notes to assess the consistency and accuracy of the interpretations. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the researcher conducted member checking by returning the preliminary interpretations or summaries of interview responses to participants for confirmation. Participants were invited to clarify, correct, or elaborate on the researcher's interpretation of their statements. These procedures were intended to reduce interpretive errors and ensure that the reported themes accurately represented participants' experiences and perspectives.

Result and Discussion

Facilitation of Autonomy through Teacher Interpersonal Communication

Students in this category exhibit reluctance to engage when the teacher's communication is authoritative or coercive. When the educator is amicable and non-threatening, passive students exhibit increased bravery to enquire or articulate their viewpoints. This suggests that achieving autonomy is linked not just to the provision of possibilities but also to the calibre of the teacher's communication style. The findings indicate that teacher interpersonal communication played an important role in facilitating students' autonomy, although the form and intensity of this need differed across the three levels of student engagement. Active students demonstrated the strongest need for opportunities to express opinions, participate in dialogue, and interact directly with teachers. They appeared more motivated when teachers provided opportunities to communicate their views and participate in classroom discussions. **S1-Active explained:** "I feel more motivated when the

teacher gives us an opportunity to express our opinions. When the teacher asks what we think and allows us to discuss, I feel that I can participate more actively.”

This statement indicates that active students perceived opportunities for expression and dialogue as important conditions for their participation. The finding is consistent with the observed pattern described in the field notes. The convergence between the interview statement and the field observation provides source triangulation and indicates that students’ reported experiences were reflected in their classroom behaviour. Among moderately active students, autonomy was expressed through a need for acknowledgement and encouragement. These students did not consistently initiate participation independently but became more willing to participate when teachers explicitly encouraged them. **S2-Moderate stated:** “I usually participate when the teacher encourages me to give my opinion. If the teacher asks and gives me a chance to speak, I feel more confident to participate.”

This response suggests that teacher encouragement functioned as a stimulus for participation among moderately active students. The interview and observational evidence therefore point to the importance of supportive teacher prompts in facilitating autonomy among moderately active students. The pattern was more pronounced among passive students. These students tended to hesitate to participate when they perceived teacher communication as authoritative, coercive, or potentially judgmental. Conversely, they were more willing to ask questions and express opinions when teachers created a friendly and non-threatening environment. **S3-Passive stated:** “I am sometimes afraid to ask questions because I worry that my answer may be wrong. When the teacher speaks kindly and does not judge us, I feel more comfortable asking questions.”

This statement directly demonstrates that the student’s willingness to participate was associated with the perceived safety of teacher communication. The finding corresponds with the field-note evidence showing. Thus, the data indicate that autonomy among passive students was not simply a matter of being given opportunities to participate. It also depended on whether students perceived the classroom communication environment as safe and supportive. Overall, the findings show that teacher interpersonal communication facilitated autonomy differently across engagement levels. Active students benefited from opportunities for independent expression, moderately active students responded to encouragement and acknowledgement, while passive students required a psychologically safe communication environment before becoming willing to participate.

This discovery corresponds with the Self-Determination Theory articulated by Ryan & Deci (2020), which posits that when the demand for autonomy is satisfied, individuals experience the freedom to dictate their behaviours and articulate themselves without external constraints. In an educational setting, teacher communication that offers alternatives, honours

viewpoints, and is non-authoritarian will enhance students' intrinsic drive. Moreover, Freire (1970) underscored the significance of conversation in education, advocating for a participatory learning process rather than one monopolised by the teacher as the exclusive purveyor of knowledge. This dialogical method enables pupils to engage actively in learning, so enhancing their sense of autonomy.

Moreover, transparent and polite communication can foster constructive relationships between educators and students. This positive interaction fosters trust, which is a crucial foundation for pupils to articulate themselves without the apprehension of criticism. In this setting, students are generally more at ease with experimentation, including the possibility of errors, as an integral aspect of the learning process. Consequently, autonomy fostered by teachers' interpersonal contact enhances the establishment of a secure and inclusive learning environment.

The Significance of Teacher Communication in Enhancing Competence

The second major finding concerns the role of teacher interpersonal communication in developing students' sense of competence. The data show that students associated competence with clear explanations, opportunities to ask questions, constructive feedback, and individualised assistance. However, the specific communication needs differed according to students' engagement levels. Active students emphasised the importance of clear explanations and opportunities for clarification. **S4-Active stated:** "I understand the lesson better when the teacher explains it clearly and gives us time to ask questions. The teacher's feedback also helps me know whether my answer is correct and what I need to improve."

The statement indicates that active students used teacher interaction as a means of strengthening their understanding and evaluating their own learning. This finding is consistent with the original results, which show that active students were more motivated to understand learning materials thoroughly and frequently interacted with teachers to improve their comprehension. Moderately active students placed greater emphasis on systematic explanations and concrete examples. **S5-Moderate explained:** "I need the teacher to explain the material step by step. Examples also help me understand the lesson. If the explanation is too fast, I sometimes do not understand what I should do."

This response supports the finding that moderately active students needed structured instructional communication to develop confidence in their understanding. The original findings similarly indicate that these students preferred systematic explanations and concrete examples and became more confident when teachers provided organised explanations and opportunities for questions. Passive students showed a stronger dependence on direct teacher assistance. **S6-Passive stated:** "Sometimes I do not understand the material when the teacher explains it too quickly. I feel more confident when the teacher explains it again and helps me directly."

The statement demonstrates that individualised support was particularly important for passive students. This finding corresponds with the existing results, which indicate that passive students became more motivated when teachers repeated explanations, provided personalised assistance, and addressed individual learning difficulties. Taken together, these findings indicate that teacher communication supported competence through different forms of instructional responsiveness. Active students benefited from interactive explanation and feedback, moderately active students required structured explanations and examples, while passive students benefited particularly from repeated explanations and individualised assistance.

This corresponds with Bandura (1997) idea of self-efficacy, which posits that an individual's conviction in their capabilities is significantly shaped by learning experiences facilitated by the environment. In an educational setting, effective, responsive, and helpful communication from teachers significantly impacts students' evaluation of their comprehension of the topic. The necessity for competency is apparent in the teacher's fervent passion for comprehensive explanations, opportunity for enquiries, and constructive comments within the engaged student group. Students in this group exhibit enhanced motivation to comprehend the content thoroughly. They often engage with the teacher to enhance their comprehension, so facilitating open and interactive communication that bolsters their confidence in learning.

In the moderately engaged student cohort, competency manifests when the educator articulates the subject effectively and without haste. Students in this cohort typically want methodical elucidations and tangible illustrations to comprehend the subject matter. When the instructor delivers organised explanations and offers opportunities for enquiries, pupils experience increased confidence in their comprehension. Nevertheless, if educators are less responsive or fail to provide clarity, students' enthusiasm to study typically diminishes due to uncertainties regarding their own competencies. In the passive student group, the necessity for competency is significantly reliant on direct assistance from the instructor. Students in this group expressed increased motivation when educators were amenable to reiterating explanations, offering personalised assistance, and addressing the challenges they faced. A tailored and encouraging communication strategy aids passive pupils in progressively developing confidence in their learning. If educators provide content too rapidly or neglect to consider students' comprehension levels, this may diminish self-confidence and render pupils more passive in their learning experience.

These findings corroborate Albert Bandura's assertion that environmental support for successful experiences enhances self-efficacy, hence influencing learning motivation. Moreover, according to Self-Determination Theory Ryan & Deci (2020) assert that when the desire for competence is fulfilled, individuals perceive themselves as adept at mastering

activities and confronting obstacles proficiently. In this setting, teacher interpersonal contact that offers clear explanations, positive comments, and support for learning challenges is essential for fostering a learning experience that bolsters students' sense of competence. This corresponds with Hattie & Timperley (2007) assertion that successful feedback should address three fundamental questions: "Where am I going?", "How am I progressing?", and "What are the next steps?", thereby providing students with a clear trajectory in their learning journey.

Moreover, communication that promotes proficiency is intricately linked to the manner in which educators introduce learning problems. Educators who can modify the complexity of the content to align with students' capabilities will facilitate incremental progress for learners. The experience of achievement is a vital element in enhancing student self-confidence. According to Bandura (1997), mastery experiences are a fundamental source of self-efficacy. Conversely, if the activity is very challenging without sufficient help, students often perceive themselves as incompetent and experience a decline in motivation.

Additionally, a positive communication environment enables students to be less apprehensive about making errors. In a supportive environment, errors are perceived as a phase of the learning process, rather than as failings. This is consistent with Dweck (2007) concept of a growth mindset, which posits that individuals who perceive their abilities as something that can be enhanced are more receptive to challenges and less inclined to surrender when confronted with obstacles. Teachers who are capable of effectively communicating this information will encourage students to be more courageous in their efforts to learn and continue.

This concept is consistent with Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which posits that learning is more effective when students receive support that is tailored to their developmental stage (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, it is possible to infer that the interpersonal communication of teachers in the context of promoting competency is not limited to the delivery of material, but also encompasses the provision of feedback, emotional support, and the effective management of learning challenges. A more effective and meaningful learning process will be facilitated by a clear, responsive, and adaptive communication approach, which will help students develop confidence in their abilities.

Empathetic Communication by Educators in Fostering Connections

Relatedness emerged as an important dimension of teacher-student communication across all three groups. However, its role differed according to students' engagement characteristics. For active students, positive teacher-student relationships reinforced existing motivation. **S7-Active stated:** "I feel comfortable learning when the teacher appreciates my participation. When the teacher responds positively to my ideas, I become more confident to speak and participate again."

This statement indicates that acknowledgement and positive teacher responses strengthened active students' confidence and willingness to participate. The finding corresponds with the original results, which indicate that active students valued constructive rapport and acknowledgement of their engagement and contribution. Among moderately active students, relatedness was reflected in the desire for teacher attention and support. **S8-Moderate explained:** "I feel more motivated when the teacher pays attention to us, not only when we are studying but also when we have difficulties. When the teacher asks about our problems and tries to help, I feel that the teacher cares about us."

This statement demonstrates that students interpreted personal attention as an indicator of teacher care. The finding is consistent with the existing results, which show that moderately active students reported greater motivation when teachers asked about their well-being or provided assistance with academic problems. For passive students, relatedness appeared to be particularly important because these students associated participation with psychological safety and the absence of judgement. **S9-Passive stated:** "I will participate more when I feel that the teacher will not judge me. If the teacher is friendly and listens to me, I feel safer to ask questions and give my opinion."

This statement provides direct evidence that passive students perceived supportive teacher relationships as a condition for participation. The finding corresponds with the original results, which indicate that passive students were more willing to engage when they perceived psychological safety and non-judgmental communication. Overall, the findings indicate that empathetic teacher communication contributed to students' sense of belonging and security. However, its function differed across engagement levels. For active students, relatedness reinforced participation. For moderately active students, it encouraged involvement. For passive students, it appeared to provide an important interpersonal condition for participation.

This discovery corresponds with Rogers (1969) viewpoint, which highlighted the significance of sympathetic relationships in learning, wherein a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere facilitates optimal individual development. In an educational setting, sympathetic communication from educators establishes the basis for fostering meaningful relationships with pupils. In the passive student cohort, relatedness was a crucial determinant of learning engagement. Students in this group expressed that they would only engage if they perceived psychological safety and an absence of judgement from their educators. Empathetic communication, characterised by non-judgmental listening and supportive engagement, enhanced their self-confidence. This indicates that passive students require a relationship that offers a sense of security before other demands may be addressed.

In the moderately engaged student cohort, relatedness manifested as a desire for teacher attention and support. Students exhibited increased motivation when educators shown

personal attention, such as enquiring about their well-being or offering solutions to academic challenges. Teachers were viewed as inconsistent in their words and behaviour, thereby eroding student trust. This indicates that connectivity is established not solely via spoken communication, but also through persistent teaching dispositions. This discovery corresponds with Nel Noddings's viewpoint on the ethic of care, which underscores that successful educational relationships are established by genuine and continuous caring, rather than merely formal exchanges.

In the engaged student group, connectivity functioned as a reinforcing element that enhanced pre-existing motivation. Students in this category required a constructive rapport with their educators, characterised by acknowledgement of their engagement and contribution to the learning process. A positive relationship enhances students' confidence in articulating ideas and engaging effectively. In this context, teacher interpersonal communication fosters comfort and facilitates the optimal development of students' potential. According to Self-Determination Theory, Ryan & Deci (2020) asserted that the fulfilment of the demand for relatedness leads individuals to experience acceptance, value, and significant relationships with others. Empathetic communication by teachers fosters a supportive classroom atmosphere, enabling pupils to feel integrated into the learning environment. Additionally, Vygotsky (1978) underscored the significance of social contact in cognitive growth, asserting that a constructive relationship between educators and learners can enhance the learning process through the provision of social support.

Empathic communication from educators contributes to cultivating a sense of belonging among students inside the learning environment. Students who perceive acceptance and value are generally more emotionally and academically engaged. This corresponds with Baumeister & Leary (1995), who asserted that the urge for belonging and acceptance is a fundamental human requirement that affects individual motivation and behaviour. A robust sense of relatedness will promote greater student engagement and commitment to the learning process. This corresponds with Rogers (1969) viewpoint, which highlighted that relationships founded on empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity will promote optimal individual growth. This enables pupils to articulate ideas, pose enquiries, and engage without apprehension in the educational environment. Theoretical backing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goleman, 1995; Rogers, 1969) underscores that relatedness fostered through sympathetic communication is a crucial element in establishing an inclusive and significant learning environment.

Incorporation of Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness in Learning Motivation

This study's results demonstrate that the three psychological requirements in Self-Determination Theory are interconnected and constitute a unified system that affects student learning motivation. According to Ryan & Deci (2020), concurrently satisfying the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness will enhance greater and more enduring intrinsic motivation. Within the framework of this study, these three variables are interdependent, enhancing one another while interacting with student characteristics. The findings can be interpreted via the lens of social constructivism as articulated by Vygotsky (1978), which underscores that learning transpires through significant social interactions. In this context, teachers' interpersonal contact functions as a fundamental means of addressing students' psychological needs and promoting their cognitive growth. Moreover, Bandura (1997) notion of self-efficacy substantiates the conclusion that a perception of competence, bolstered by a favourable social environment, markedly enhances students' willingness to learn.

The findings of the present study are consistent with previous empirical research showing that teacher communication plays an important role in shaping students' motivation, engagement, and classroom experiences. The findings also correspond with the work of Xie and Derakhshan (2021), who emphasize the importance of teacher interpersonal communication in establishing positive classroom relationships and supporting students' learning experiences. Their work highlights the role of teacher communication in reducing interpersonal barriers and creating a classroom environment in which students feel more comfortable participating and interacting. The present findings extend this perspective by showing how students themselves perceive communication behaviors as meaningful indicators of teacher support. When teachers listen, respond respectfully, and provide understandable explanations, students are more likely to perceive the classroom as psychologically supportive.

The present findings are further consistent with Wentzel (2015), who identifies teacher support and teacher-student relationships as important social factors associated with students' academic motivation and engagement. From an SDT perspective, supportive teacher communication can facilitate students' internal motivation when students perceive that their teachers respect their perspectives, acknowledge their efforts, and provide meaningful guidance. The current findings suggest that such communication is particularly important when teachers combine instructional direction with interpersonal responsiveness. Students do not simply value information from teachers. They also value the manner in which that information is delivered. Communication that is respectful, responsive, and encouraging may therefore support both students' academic functioning and their psychological needs.

Taken together, the findings confirm and extend previous research on teacher communication and SDT. Xie and Derakhshan (2021) emphasize interpersonal communication as a foundation for positive classroom interaction, while Wentzel (2015) demonstrates the importance of teacher support for students' motivation and engagement. The present study connects these perspectives by showing that communication constitutes one of the practical mechanisms through which teacher support can satisfy students' psychological needs.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that instructor interpersonal contact significantly influences student learning motivation. According to Self-Determination Theory, student learning motivation is affected by the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are expressed through the quality of interactions between teachers and students during the educational process. The findings indicated that open, supportive, and responsive interpersonal communication from teachers can foster student learning engagement in various manners across different groups. For passive students, establishing relatedness is the first requirement, achieved through sympathetic and non-threatening communication, ensuring students feel secure in their learning engagement. For moderately active students, learning motivation is affected by the equilibrium between the needs for competence and autonomy, with the clarity of material presentation and opportunities for engagement being essential determinants. For active students, the key motivators are the desires for autonomy and competence, which are enhanced by strong interactions with educators. This research illustrates that these three psychological demands are interrelated and collectively influence students' overall learning motivation.

This research has various limitations that simultaneously create potential for further investigation to enhance the comprehensiveness of the study. This study employed a qualitative methodology using a limited sample of 12 students from a single institution, hence the findings cannot be widely generalised. Consequently, future research should encompass a greater sample size and incorporate diverse school backgrounds, including regional, cultural, and institutional features.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications, Inc.
- Doyle, L., McCabe, C., Keogh, B., Brady, A., & McCann, M. (2020). An overview of the qualitative descriptive design within nursing research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(5), 443–455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987119880234>
- Dweck, C. S. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Ballantine Books.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Frymier, A. B., & Houser, M. L. (2015). The Role of Oral Participation in Student Engagement. *Communication Education*, 65(1), 83–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2015.1066019>
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Houser, M., & Frymier, A. (2015). The role of oral participation in student engagement -. *Communication Education*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3689.3288>
- KPAI. (2024). *Laporan pengaduan kasus pendidikan tahun 2023*.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). *Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_17
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*. C.E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61(xxxx), 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wentzel, K. R. (2015). *Teacher-student relationships, motivation, and competence at school*. Routledge.
- Xie, F., & Derakhshan, A. (2021). A conceptual review of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in the instructional context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(July), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.708490>