

## Interpersonal Communication in Building Character and Its Implications for Education Policy

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keyword:</p> <p>Interpersonal communication; Communication strategy; Educational communication; Character building; Education policy</p>	<p>Lecturer interpersonal communication is essential because it allows the formation of deep relationships and facilitates understanding of students' character values, which are necessary in facing the challenges of modern society. This research aims to identify and analyze interpersonal communication strategies applied by lecturers in shaping student character, as well as to understand the critical attitudes emphasized in the communication process. The research used a qualitative approach with subjects from lecturers and students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk. Data was collected through observation and interviews and then analyzed using a content analysis approach with the help of Nvivo 12 Plus software. These findings confirm that interpersonal communication between lecturers and students is crucial in forming quality student character. The five central attitudes in lecturer communication, namely positive, open, providing opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support, play a significant role in forming quality student character. These attitudes create an inspiring learning environment, build trusting relationships, strengthen engagement, encourage the achievement of full potential, and provide self-confidence. The implication for education policy is the need to integrate training and evaluation of lecturers' interpersonal communication in professional development programs to ensure the formation of quality and adaptive student character in facing the challenges of modern society.</p>

### INTRODUCTION

Building character is a process that involves developing attitudes, values, and behavior that become the basis for social interactions and decision-making. This involves self-understanding, reflection on the values held, and consistent efforts to practice them in everyday life. Building character also involves learning from experiences, both success and failure, to continue to develop a more assertive, ethical, and resilient personality. By building a solid character, a person becomes better able to face challenges, maintain integrity, and make a positive contribution to society (Elbes & Oktaviani, 2022; Marini, 2017; Marini et al., 2019; Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020). This is also important in education, especially in building student character.

Building student character is very important because students are the next generation who will play key roles in various aspects of life in the future (Benawa, 2023; Mahmud et al., 2023; Prasetyaningtyas & Sutaryono, 2021). Strong character, such as integrity, responsibility, cooperation, and ethics, supports academic success and prepares students to become influential

leaders and responsible citizens (Benawa, 2023; Chong & Hamid, 2016; Rif 'Ah et al., 2020). In an increasingly complex and competitive world, having good character allows students to face challenges with a positive attitude, make moral decisions, and contribute constructively to society (Ashraf et al., 2013; Freeks, 2015). Therefore, character education must become an integral part of the curriculum and culture of educational institutions, ensuring that students are not only academically skilled but also emotionally and socially mature (Gunawan et al., 2018; Rif 'Ah et al., 2020).

The role of lecturers in building student character is crucial because lecturers function as science teachers and moral and ethical guides. Through daily interactions, lecturers have a unique opportunity to influence students' personal and character development. By providing good role models, supporting open and empathetic communication, and integrating character values in the learning process, lecturers can help students develop integrity, responsibility, and the ability to work together. Effective lecturers understand that character education is an essential foundation for creating graduates who are academically competent and ready to face moral and social challenges in society (Chong & Hamid, 2016; Munawir et al., 2023).

In building character, integrating character values into education requires a practical communication approach (Malik & Sinha, 2024; Sarwi et al., 2018). Lecturers must use supportive, open, and empathetic interpersonal communication to create a learning environment conducive to character development (Anzari & Pratiwi, 2021; Rum et al., 2020). By listening actively, providing constructive feedback, and applying positive and inspiring language, lecturers can encourage students to internalize values such as integrity, responsibility, and cooperation. A personal and empathetic communication approach strengthens the relationship between lecturers and students and builds trust and mutual respect, an essential basis in character-building.

Theoretically, interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between two or more individuals that involve direct interaction and mutual influence. Interpersonal communication theory includes various models and concepts, such as Berlo's model, which highlights the components of communication (Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver) and concepts such as empathy, active listening, and feedback. This theory also underlines the importance of social and emotional context in communication, where the clarity of the message and the quality of the relationship between the parties involved greatly influence the effectiveness of communication. Effective interpersonal communication builds mutual understanding, strengthens relationships, and facilitates cooperation and constructive conflict resolution (Johnson et al., 2017; Punyanunt-Carter & Arias, 2017; Vrchota, 2011).

In the 2023-2024 academic year, FISIP Muhammadiyah University Luwuk has 444 students divided into two study programs, Government Science and Communication Science, supported by 16 lecturers. In this context, lecturers are crucial in building student character through practical interpersonal communication. Since Al Islam and Muhammadiyah are the fourth dharma in the Catur Dharma of Higher Education after education, research, and community service, integrating these values into the learning process becomes very relevant. Lecturers are responsible for delivering academic material and internalizing Islamic and Muhammadiyah values in every interaction with students. Through empathetic communication, active listening, and providing constructive feedback, lecturers can help students develop strong, ethical, and responsible characters according to the values promoted by Luwuk Muhammadiyah University.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand and develop effective strategies in lecturer interpersonal communication that can shape student character holistically at FISIP Muhammadiyah University Luwuk. Amid the current challenges of globalization and social complexity, education focuses on academic aspects and the formation of solid and ethical character. Considering the critical role of lecturers in the educational process and character formation of students, this research aims to identify the most effective interpersonal communication practices. Thus, the results of this research can make an essential contribution to improving the quality of character education in the university environment, ensuring that

students are not only academically ready but also morally and socially mature and able to become leaders with responsibility and integrity in the future.

Based on the research background, this research problem is formulated as a research question: What is the role of lecturers' interpersonal communication in building student character? What are the dominant attitudes that emerge in lecturers' interpersonal communication in building the character of students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk? This research explores the communication strategies and approaches lecturers use to influence and develop student character effectively, as well as identifying best practices that can be implemented in higher education to achieve these goals.

This research aims to identify and analyze interpersonal communication strategies used by lecturers in building student character at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk, as well as to understand the central attitudes highlighted in this communication. It is hoped that this research can provide practical insight for lecturers and educational institutions in developing communication methods that can improve the holistic character formation of students. The implications of this research include improving the quality of interactions between lecturers and students, which supports academic success and the formation of students' morals and ethics, preparing them to become leaders with responsibility and integrity in society. The results of this research can also be used as a basis for designing training programs for lecturers, strengthening curricula that focus on character education, and encouraging the development of institutional policies that support the formation of solid and ethical character.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research method uses a qualitative approach to explore it, with research subjects including lecturers and students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk. A purposive sampling technique was chosen to determine informants relevant to the research theme, ensuring they understood sufficiently and could provide relevant information. In this case, the informants selected included leaders, lecturers, alumni, and students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk. Data was collected through observation and interview techniques, allowing researchers to understand lecturers' interpersonal communication practices in building student character.

Data analysis was carried out using a content analysis approach, which helps researchers identify patterns, themes, and meanings that emerge from the data collected. To facilitate the analysis process, researchers used Nvivo software, which allows efficient grouping and categorization of data. Using Nvivo 12 Plus enables systematic and efficient qualitative data analysis, facilitating in-depth grouping, categorization, and interpretation (Salahudin et al., 2020). With this approach, this research is expected to provide in-depth insight into lecturers' interpersonal communication strategies that are effective in forming student character, as well as practical implications in higher education at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Lecturer interpersonal communication in building student character***

This section summarizes the interview results regarding lecturer interpersonal communication in building student character into a word cloud. A word cloud is a visual representation of the words that appear most frequently in an interview, where the words that appear more frequently are displayed larger. Through this technique, we can quickly see the patterns and primary focus of lecturers' interpersonal communication, which influences student character formation at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk. Thus, this introduction provides an initial overview of the main themes, which are discussed further in the analysis of interview results regarding the role of lecturers in building student character.



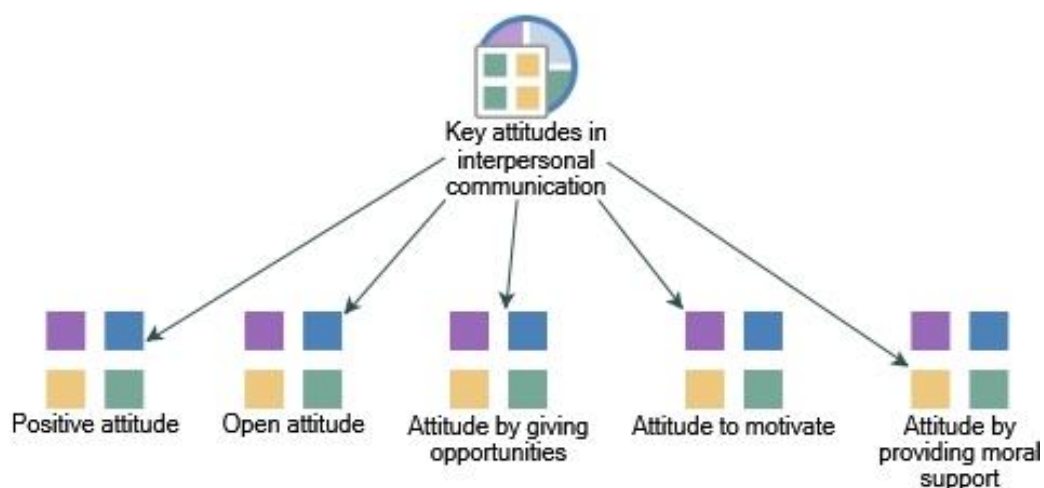
outside the academic context provides space for students to convey the obstacles they face in their personal lives, including personal or financial problems. In this relationship, lecturers act as moral and ethical mentors who pay attention to academic aspects and the overall welfare of students. By creating an atmosphere of open and empathetic communication, lecturers can better understand the problems faced by students outside the academic scope, which in turn can help form a strong and responsible student character.

The statement also emphasizes that good interpersonal communication between lecturers and students is essential to building openness and trust. With openness in communication, lecturers can know in more depth the problems or obstacles students face so they can provide appropriate support and guidance. This reflects the importance of interpersonal communication in building mutually beneficial relationships between lecturers and students, which can contribute significantly to forming quality student characters who are ready to face various challenges in the future.

This data trend emphasizes the crucial role of lecturers in building effective interpersonal communication with students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk. Through open communication, lecturers become academic teachers and moral and ethical mentors who care about the overall welfare of students. By listening empathetically and providing support, lecturers can create an environment that allows students to share their obstacles. This reflects the importance of openness and trust in the relationship between lecturers and students, which is the main foundation for forming quality student character. Thus, the role of lecturers in building effective interpersonal communication is not only a determining factor in students' academic success but also in developing solid personalities and morals, which will equip them to face various challenges in the future with resilience.

**Key attitudes in lecturer interpersonal communication to build student character**

The positive impact of lecturer interpersonal communication is significant in forming student character. The fundamental attitudes emphasized, such as being positive, open, giving opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support, are a strong foundation for developing solid and ethical character. Through effective communication, lecturers can create a conducive learning environment, facilitate the development of these attitudes, and provide a sustainable positive impact for students. The central attitudes in lecturer interpersonal communication in building the character of students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Luwuk Banggai University, have been mapped as follows:



**Figure 2.** Key attitudes in lecturer interpersonal communication in building student character

*Source: Processed by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2024*

A positive attitude in lecturer interpersonal communication is fundamental to forming strong student character. When lecturers exude a positive attitude in words and behavior, they create a fun and inspiring learning environment for students. The positive attitude of lecturers also serves as a role model for students, encouraging them to adopt the same attitude in living their daily lives. By strengthening positivity, lecturers can help students overcome challenges, build self-confidence, and develop a proactive attitude in dealing with various situations, thereby strengthening the student's overall character.

An open attitude in lecturer interpersonal communication is critical to forming quality student character. When lecturers demonstrate an open attitude, they create a safe space for students to share their thoughts, ideas, and feelings without fear or inhibition. Open lecturers actively listen to students' views, pay attention to individual needs, and treat students with respect and appreciation. Through this open attitude, lecturers can build strong and trusting relationships with students, facilitating their personal and academic growth and assisting in developing inclusive and broad-minded character.

The attitude of providing opportunities in lecturers' interpersonal communication has a significant impact on forming students' character with integrity and empathy. With this attitude, lecturers provide space for students to participate, express opinions, and explore their ideas without fear of being underestimated or ignored. Lecturers who provide opportunities to create an inclusive learning environment and encourage students to develop critical thinking skills and initiative. By providing this opportunity, lecturers can help students hone their communication skills, increase their self-confidence, and feel that their contributions are appreciated, strengthening students' character regarding responsibility, cooperation, and independence.

Motivating attitudes in lecturers' interpersonal communication is vital in forming persistent and enthusiastic student characters. When lecturers can motivate students, whether through words of encouragement, support, or role models, they help students find their own intrinsic motivation in pursuing academic and personal goals. This attitude creates an environment that encourages students to develop abilities, overcome obstacles, and reach their maximum potential. Motivating lecturers also help students stay focused, persevere in facing challenges, and develop an attitude of never giving up, which is crucial in building strong character and persevering in facing various obstacles in the future.

The attitude of providing moral support in lecturers' interpersonal communication is a strong foundation for forming a confident and empathetic student character. Lecturers who can provide moral support to students, whether in terms of praise, encouragement, or recognition of their achievements, create an atmosphere that raises enthusiasm and self-confidence. This support encourages students to overcome difficulties or obstacles and increases their confidence in taking risks, trying new things, and innovating. By providing consistent and continuous moral support, lecturers help build students' characters who are tough, full of self-confidence, and able to face challenges with an optimistic attitude.

In the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Luwuk Banggai University context, the central attitudes manifested in lecturers' interpersonal communication becomes a solid foundation for forming quality student characters. By upholding a positive, open attitude, providing opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support, lecturers significantly contribute to developing student's personalities, independence, and integrity. These attitudes create an inclusive learning environment, encourage students to take an active role in learning, and motivate them to reach their full potential. Thus, through interpersonal communication based on these attitudes, FISIP lecturers at Luwuk Banggai University effectively help shape student characters who are ready to face various challenges in the future.

The implications of the findings from this research are very relevant to higher education development at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Luwuk Banggai University. The central attitudes identified in lecturers' interpersonal communication, such as being positive, open, providing opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support, guide lecturers in strengthening their role in forming student character. Faculty can use these findings to develop more effective communication strategies, strengthen relationships with students, and facilitate positive character development. In addition, a better understanding of the positive impact of

lecturers' interpersonal communication can also encourage the development of education and training programs for lecturers to improve their communication skills. Thus, this research provides valuable insight into the role of lecturers' interpersonal communication in shaping student character and significantly contributes to efforts to improve the quality of higher education as a whole.

Thus, the importance of interpersonal communication in the context of higher education cannot be ignored. Interpersonal communication is the main foundation for forming good relationships between many parties and facilitating the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experience. In the academic realm, effective interpersonal communication strengthens learning and teaching and enriches students' learning experiences. Lecturers who can carry out interpersonal communication well have the potential to create an inclusive learning environment, motivate students to participate actively, and assist in developing robust and ethical character. Therefore, understanding and applying the principles of good interpersonal communication is vital to creating a dynamic educational environment, building mutually beneficial relationships, and helping students reach their full potential. Thus, greater emphasis on the importance of interpersonal communication in higher education can significantly contribute to strengthening the quality of learning and preparing students to face future challenges.

### ***Interpersonal communication in building character and its implications for education policy***

Lecturer interpersonal communication has a vital role in shaping student character. Through deep and meaningful interactions, lecturers can instill positive values for developing student character. The five central attitudes found in this research—positive attitudes, openness, providing opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support—have proven effective in creating a conducive and inspiring learning environment. These attitudes build mutual trust between lecturers and students, strengthen students' involvement in learning, encourage them to reach their full potential and provide the confidence necessary to face various challenges.

These findings have significant implications for education policy. To support the formation of quality student character, educational policies must integrate interpersonal communication training and evaluation in lecturer professional development programs. This may include periodic workshops, training, and assessments that focus on interpersonal communication skills. By ensuring that lecturers have good communication skills and can apply key attitudes in their interactions with students, educational institutions can create a more effective learning environment and support the development of student characters who are ready to face the challenges of modern society.

Research conducted at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Luwuk, shows that effective interpersonal communication between lecturers and students also improves the quality of learning. Students who feel supported and motivated by their lecturers tend to be more active in the learning process, more open in expressing opinions, and more courageous in taking initiative. Apart from that, an open attitude and providing opportunities from lecturers can encourage students to think critically and creatively, which are essential skills in facing the dynamics of the world of work and society. Thus, good interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students shape character and enrich students' academic experiences.

Furthermore, educational policies supporting the development of lecturers' interpersonal communication can also improve students' mental well-being. Students who feel valued and emotionally supported by their lecturers usually have lower stress levels and higher well-being. This is important considering the academic and social challenges facing students today. Therefore, educational institutions must ensure lecturers have access to the resources and training necessary to develop practical interpersonal communication skills. This policy will improve the quality of education and help create a generation of leaders who have strong character and are ready to face global challenges.

Character development is a critical element of education that can form individuals who are more qualified and resilient in facing various challenges in the future (Handayani et al., 2020; Kahn, 2017; Khine & Liu, 2022; Rami & Fernandez, 2015). The implication of these findings for educational policy is the need for greater emphasis on character development in the educational curriculum. Policies integrating character values such as integrity, honesty, responsibility, hard work, and empathy into every aspect of learning will ensure that education aims to increase academic knowledge and form individuals with solid morality and personality. In this way, educational institutions can play a more significant role in producing a generation that is intellectually intelligent, ethical, responsible, and ready to contribute positively to society.

## **CONCLUSION**

These findings confirm that interpersonal communication between lecturers and students is crucial in forming quality student character. Open, empathetic, and in-depth communication allows lecturers to understand better the obstacles and problems students face outside the academic scope. This not only strengthens the relationship between lecturers and students but also helps to form student characters who are tough, responsible, and ready to face various challenges in the future. Thus, lecturers have an essential role in building effective interpersonal communication for students' academic success and the development of personality and moral aspects that are important in life.

It can be seen that the five central attitudes in lecturer interpersonal communication, namely positive attitudes, openness, providing opportunities, motivating, and providing moral support, significantly impact the development of the quality of student character. A lecturer's positive attitude creates an inspiring learning environment, while an open attitude builds a relationship of mutual trust. Providing opportunities strengthens student engagement, while motivation encourages them to reach their full potential. Moral support from lecturers gives students confidence. By reinforcing these five attitudes through effective interpersonal communication, lecturers can help shape student characters who are ready to face future challenges, strengthening the Faculty's commitment to producing graduates who are not only academically qualified but also have integrity, independence, and a passion for development.

The implication of these findings for future educational policy development is that educational institutions must strengthen lecturer professional development programs focusing on interpersonal communication skills. Policies must include routine training and periodic evaluations to ensure lecturers can implement positive attitudes, be open, provide opportunities, motivate, and provide moral support effectively. Apart from that, there needs to be a feedback mechanism for students to assess the quality of interpersonal interactions. In this way, educational institutions can create a learning environment that emphasizes academic achievement and the development of student character and morals, thereby producing graduates who are ready to face global challenges with integrity and independence.

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