Interpersonal Communication in Managing Burnout Among Final Year Students

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Article Info

Dates:
Accepted: 3-08-2025
Revised: 8-09-2025
Published: 21-5-2026

Keywords:
Student Burnout, Emotional Support, Academic Burnout, Interpersonal Communication, Psychological Resilience.

Abstract

Burnout among final-year students has become a significant academic mental health concern due to pressures related to thesis completion, academic performance, and career uncertainty. Although previous studies have identified social support as a protective factor, most have adopted quantitative approaches that focus on statistical relationships and psychological predictors while overlooking students' lived communication experiences. This study aimed to explore the forms, roles, and meanings of interpersonal communication in managing burnout among final-year students. Using an exploratory qualitative design, the study involved five final-year students from various disciplines at Dr. Soetomo University, Surabaya, who experienced high academic stress. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings identified five major themes: emotional support from significant others, communication as emotional venting and regulation, the effectiveness of face-to-face and digital communication, academic support from advisors, and the negative effects of ineffective communication. Supportive interactions with peers, family members, romantic partners, and academic advisors helped students regulate emotions, regain motivation, solve academic problems, and strengthen psychological resilience. In contrast, blaming responses, inappropriate humor, and unsupportive communication intensified emotional distress and burnout symptoms. The novelty of this study lies in its communication-centered perspective, positioning interpersonal communication as an active coping mechanism rather than merely a contextual factor. The findings contribute to communication and mental health literature by highlighting the importance of emotional validation and communication quality in burnout management. Universities should strengthen peer-support programs, mentoring systems, and communication-based mental health interventions to enhance student well-being and resilience.

I. Introduction

Burnout is a multidimensional psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced self-efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In recent years, this condition has been increasingly experienced by students, especially those in their final year of study who are facing various pressures such as thesis writing, career preparation, and uncertainty about the future (Ricardo et al., 2021; Toubasi et al., 2022). This cumulative pressure can significantly threaten students' psychological well-being and academic performance. For example, research at Muhammadiyah University Semarang found that final-year medical students with low social support experienced moderate to high levels of academic burnout, indicating a fairly strong negative correlation between social support and burnout (Nadira et al., 2024). However, at Dr. Soetomo University in Surabaya, although there is no formal quantitative data, observations indicate an increase in complaints related to learning fatigue, decreased academic motivation, and emotional stress, which indicate symptoms of burnout among final-year students.

Previous studies on student burnout have mostly focused on causal factors and used quantitative approaches, thereby tending to reduce this phenomenon to measurable variables and ignore students' subjective experiences. For example, the study "Academic Burnout Among Working Students: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Social Support" shows that self-efficacy and social support have an influence on burnout but remain within the framework of correlational statistics (Mella Aprilia Andini, Amanda Pasca Rini, 2024). Communication is fundamental to human interaction,

impacting all aspects of life and forming the basis for social relationships and networks (Lisdiantini et al., 2024). In fact, psychosocial dimensions such as interpersonal communication play an important role as adaptive mechanisms in dealing with academic pressure. According to Joseph A. DeVito, interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages between two or more people, with direct feedback (Joseph A. DeVito, 2016). The occurrence of any interaction activity in a particular context depends on the presence of communication, because only through communication does the potential to influence individual behavior emerge (Rhamadona et al., 2024). In this context, interpersonal communication can be understood as an important means of facilitating emotional expression, social support, and the formation of shared meaning between students and academic advisors (Kim & Lee, 2022; Sedhom et al., 2022). Through meaningful interactions, students have the potential to develop effective coping strategies to reduce the intensity of burnout.

Recent research shows that various academic and psychosocial factors play a significant role in the formation of burnout. (Cuevas-Caravaca et al., 2024) found that burnout among students is influenced by personality, study load, and excessive study hours, while nursing students show higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to other fields. Similarly, low academic engagement exacerbates the risk of burnout, while high learning engagement can increase motivation and reduce the tendency for academic fatigue (Reyes-de-Cózar et al., 2023). In a broader context, social support and academic self-efficacy play a crucial role in maintaining students' mental health during stressful times, such as a pandemic, with protective effects against stress, anxiety, and depression (Cassaretto, Espinosa, et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, social support has a negative relationship with academic procrastination and burnout through the mediation of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, emphasizing the importance of a supportive social environment in improving students' academic well-being (X. Chen et al., 2025). Other studies also confirm that emotional and social factors such as loneliness and fear of alienation play an important role in mediating the relationship between burnout and student well-being. School burnout has a direct negative impact on life satisfaction, while indirectly increasing feelings of loneliness and social isolation (H. L. Chen et al., 2022). Therefore, emotional support, resilience training, and meaningful social interaction are necessary to reduce the impact of burnout, which is not only academic but also relational and social (Shim & Go, 2025).

Previous research has identified high academic workload, lack of social support, and ineffective coping strategies as the main factors triggering burnout (Novitasari, 2024; and Toubasi et al., 2022). Additionally, the study "Factors Affecting Academic Burnout in Nursing Students" found that the majority of nursing students experience moderate levels of burnout, with declining academic performance being one of the most dominant aspects (Putri et al., 2023). However, most of these studies still use a quantitative cross-sectional design that focuses on statistical relationships between variables, so the relational and communicative aspects as adaptive strategies have not been explored much. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by positioning interpersonal communication not merely as an additional variable, but as a central process that enables students to regulate stress, seek support, and build resilience amid academic pressure.

A number of theories support the urgency of this perspective.

Interpersonal communication is understood as a dynamic process that facilitates the exchange of messages, emotions, and meanings in a social context, which in the academic world has been proven to be associated with an increase in psychological well-being among students (Kim & Lee, 2022; Sedhom et al., 2022). Kiesler's interpersonal communication model, for example, emphasizes the importance of warmth and control in interactions that can create a supportive academic environment (Hafkenscheid, 2024).

In line with this, Social Support Theory asserts that emotional, informational, and instrumental support through social interaction can reduce the psychological impact of stress (Berger et al., 2023; Kushendar & Maba, 2022; Liu et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Psychological Resilience Theory highlights the role of communication as a means of building resilience through shared narratives and mutual support (Zhu et al., 2023).

Contemporary research suggests that student burnout is no longer viewed solely as a consequence of excessive academic workload but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of academic demands, social relationship quality, emotional support, and individual psychological resources. Student burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academic activities, and reduced academic efficacy. Recent studies indicate that social support from family, peers, and the university environment serves as a significant protective factor against academic burnout (Cassaretto, Pérez-Aranibar, et al., 2024; Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2024). Within higher education settings, interpersonal communication functions as a crucial mechanism through which students express psychological stress, receive emotional validation and feedback, and develop a sense of social connectedness.

Meaningful interactions with peers, lecturers, family members, and counselors can reduce loneliness and enhance psychological well-being. Systematic reviews further demonstrate that social support is consistently associated with better mental health, well-being, and adaptive capacity among students facing academic pressures and university life transitions (Ruihua et al., 2025; Vicary et al., 2024). Emotional support fosters feelings of acceptance, understanding, appreciation, and reassurance, while psychological resilience reflects an individual's capacity to adapt positively to stress, challenges, and significant life changes. Evidence shows that resilience, social support, and academic self-efficacy significantly reduce psychological distress and strengthen student mental health, while resilience and perceived social support also contribute to lower depression levels and greater psychological well-being (Cassaretto, Pérez-Aranibar, et al., 2024; Dong et al., 2024). These relationships can be explained through Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress arises when individuals perceive environmental demands as exceeding their available coping resources. For students, stressors may include academic assignments, examinations, thesis completion, social relationships, and career uncertainty.

To manage these challenges, students employ both problem-focused coping strategies, such as planning and problem solving, and emotion-focused coping strategies, such as seeking emotional support and regulating emotions. Recent findings indicate that social support plays a critical role in reducing burnout by promoting more adaptive coping mechanisms (Messina et al., 2025; Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2024).

Current literature increasingly positions burnout as a broader academic

mental health issue rather than merely a problem of low learning motivation, as burnout is associated with higher risks of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and reduced well-being. Moreover, perceived social support and resilience have been shown to buffer the negative effects of maladaptive coping on student depression, whereas insufficient social support is frequently linked to greater loneliness, anxiety, and psychological distress (Dong et al., 2024; Vicary et al., 2024).

While burnout among final-year students has been extensively examined in the higher education literature (Ricardo et al., 2021; Toubasi et al., 2022), most studies have concentrated on psychological, academic, and behavioral determinants using quantitative designs (Lin et al., 2024; Linares et al., 2022). As a result, little is known about the communicative dimension of burnout, particularly how students make sense of their burnout experiences through interpersonal interactions and how communication functions as a mechanism for seeking support, regulating emotions, and sustaining psychological well-being. By focusing on students' lived experiences of interpersonal communication, this study extends the burnout literature beyond variable-based explanations and provides a communication-centered understanding of how final-year students manage burnout during the critical stage of thesis completion.

Based on this background, the main objective of this study is to explore the forms, roles, and meanings of interpersonal communication experienced by final-year students in coping with academic burnout. This study emphasizes a qualitative approach that focuses on the subjective experiences of students at Dr. Soetomo University, Surabaya, to understand how they build, practice, and reflect on interpersonal interactions in facing academic

pressure.

This study reconceptualizes burnout among final-year students by moving beyond traditional approaches that primarily emphasize psychological determinants and statistical associations. Instead, it adopts a communication-centered perspective that positions interpersonal communication as a fundamental coping resource through which students navigate academic burnout, regulate emotional responses, seek meaningful support, and strengthen psychological resilience. By examining the lived communicative experiences of students, this study provides a deeper understanding of how interpersonal interactions facilitate adaptation to academic pressures during the final stages of higher education.

The study advances the theoretical development of burnout research by integrating perspectives from interpersonal communication, social support, and psychological resilience into a more comprehensive explanatory framework. Furthermore, it offers practical contributions by generating evidence-based insights that can inform the design and implementation of peer-support initiatives, academic mentoring practices, counseling interventions, and preventive mental health strategies aimed at enhancing student well-being within higher education institutions.

2. Research Methods

This research applies a descriptive qualitative approach with an exploratory design to explore in depth the subjective meaning of the burnout experience felt by final-year students, as well as to analyze the role of interpersonal communication in alleviating this condition. This approach was chosen based on its ability to reveal personal experiences through rich narratives and interpretations (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The researcher selected the

research subjects, who were undergraduate students at Dr. Soetomo University in Surabaya who were in their sixth semester or above and were in the process of preparing their final assignments. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling techniques, taking into account relevant characteristics (Sugiyono, 2020). The identification of burnout conditions was based on the participants' direct acknowledgments in informal communication. The number of participants was determined to be between five and the point of data saturation.

The researchers selected participants using purposive sampling to ensure that all participants possessed direct experience relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria consisted of undergraduate students who had reached at least the sixth semester, were actively preparing their final project or thesis, and reported experiencing substantial academic pressure associated with thesis completion. To strengthen participant selection, burnout indicators were identified through preliminary screening interviews based on common symptoms of academic burnout, including emotional exhaustion, reduced academic motivation, feelings of helplessness, difficulty concentrating, and persistent academic stress. Only students who reported experiencing several of these symptoms over a sustained period were included in the study. Five participants from different academic disciplines met these criteria and participated in the research. Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of substantially new themes, categories, or insights emerging from subsequent interviews.

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews in a private room on campus. Each interview explored participants' experiences of academic burnout, communication practices

with peers, family members, romantic partners, and academic advisors, as well as the perceived role of these interactions in coping with academic stress. The interviews were complemented by non-verbal observations and field notes to enrich contextual understanding.

The study employed thematic analysis to examine the data systematically. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo to facilitate data management and coding. The analysis followed several stages, including familiarization with the data, initial coding, categorization of related codes, development of broader themes, and interpretation of findings through the lenses of interpersonal communication theory, social support theory, and psychological resilience theory. To enhance trustworthiness, the researchers applied source triangulation, member checking, and audit trail procedures throughout the analytical process.

The study adhered to established ethical principles for qualitative research. Prior to participation, all participants received information regarding the purpose of the study and provided informed consent voluntarily. The researchers protected participant confidentiality by replacing personal identities with pseudonyms and participant codes (P1–P5) in all transcripts, analyses, and publications. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. All interview data, recordings, and transcripts were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

Final year students often face complex academic pressures such as preparing their final assignments and preparing for work, making them prone

to academic burnout in the form of emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and feelings of helplessness. In such conditions, interpersonal communication plays an important role as emotional and social support to help manage stress. To understand the role of communication comprehensively, it is necessary to examine the participants' backgrounds through demographic data, as individual characteristics influence how they interpret and respond to burnout. Therefore, the participant profile table is presented as an important part of the interpretation of the research results research.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant Code	Age	Semester	Final Project Status	Gender
P1	21	6	Questionnaire distribution stage	Women
P2	21	6	Data analysis & writing discussions	Women
P3	23	8	Chapters 1–3, revision of chapters 1 and 2	Men
P4	21	6	Thesis material preparation (pre-proposal)	Women
P5	21	6	Chapter 3 of thesis & journal, proposal stage	Women

This study involved five final-year students from various study programs aged 21–23 years in their sixth to eighth semesters. Four participants were female and one was male, with diverse backgrounds and stages of final project completion, ranging from pre-proposal, data analysis, writing Chapter 3, to revising Chapters 1 and 2. This diversity illustrates the dynamics of different

experiences in the final project preparation process.

To deepen understanding of the research theme, the researcher analyzed the frequency of mentions of the main theme in the interviews to measure the relevance and significance of each topic in the participants' experiences. The frequency table of findings is presented in the next section.

Table 2. Frequency of Mentions of the Form and Meaning of Interpersonal Communication

No	Main Theme	Frequency of Mention	Participants Who Mentioned
1	Emotional Support	12	P1, P2, P4, P5
2	Emotional Venting	11	P1, P2, P3, P4
3	Communication Media	10	P1, P2, P3, P5
4	Academic Support from Lecturers	9	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
5	Negative Communication	7	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5

The data obtained not only represents the frequency of a theme's appearance, but also reflects the significance of that theme in shaping the participants' subjective experiences. Based on these findings, the next section will comprehensively elaborate on each theme by describing the context of its emergence, its meaning, and the variety of experiences among participants. This description aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of interpersonal communication in responding to academic burnout.

The following description of the interview findings is presented in five main themes, namely:

A. Emotional Support from Loved Ones

Final-year students often experience burnout when completing their final

assignments and alleviate it through interpersonal communication with those closest to them, such as friends, partners, or family. This emotional support is manifested through activities such as sharing stories, obtaining validation of feelings, and receiving concrete assistance related to academic activities. This support helps them feel appreciated, not alone, and more emotionally resilient in facing pressure.

The findings of the theme "Emotional Support from Loved Ones" are presented in a table containing initial, axial, and selective codes based on participant quotest.

Table 3. Initial codes, axial codes, and selective codes from Emotional Support from Close Others

Initial Codes	Axial Code	Selective Code	Description	Participant Quote
Story to a friend/boyfriend	Confiding in a close friend	Emotional support	Students tend to share stories with close friends as a form of stress relief.	*"I talk to my best friend and also my partner... they can understand my current situation..." (P1)*
Validating feelings	Being listened to without judgment	Emotional support	Validation from friends/family provides a sense of calm and a feeling of not being alone.	*"I feel more at peace because I can express what I feel without fear of*

				being judged." (P2)
Receiving hugs, face-to-face interaction	Direct interaction	Emotional support	Face-to-face communication (not just text) is more comforting for some participants.	*"When I need a hug or a long chat, I meet up in person." (P2)*
Active support from partners	Practical support	Emotional support	Partners or friends provide both emotional and technical support.	*"My boyfriend… even helps me finish my work." (P5)*

Data shows that students actively rely on emotional support from those closest to them, such as friends and partners, to cope with academic and personal pressures. They share their feelings not solely to find solutions, but to gain empathy and acceptance without fear of judgment, thereby creating a sense of comfort, relief, and complete acceptance. Emotional validation from those closest to them reinforces the belief that they are not facing problems alone, helping to maintain emotional stability.

"I talk to my best friend and also my partner... they can understand my current situation..." (P1)

Based on the quote above, it explains that close friends and romantic partners function as important support systems by providing understanding, empathy, and a sense of acceptance. For P1, interpersonal communication is not merely a means of sharing problems but also a

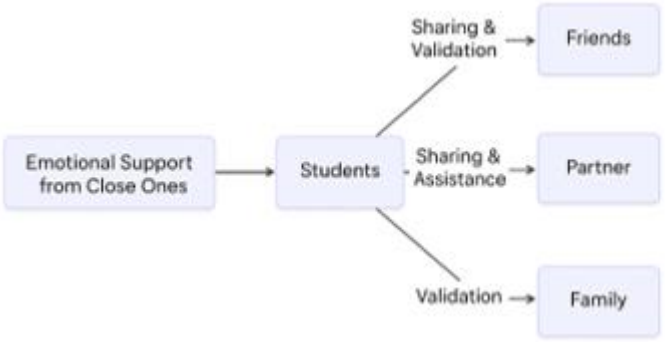
mechanism for obtaining social support that helps alleviate academic pressure and reduce feelings of isolation during the thesis completion process.

"I feel more at peace because I can express what I feel without fear of being judged." (P2)

Based on the quote above highlights the importance of emotional validation in interpersonal communication. P2 experiences a sense of relief and emotional comfort because they can openly express their feelings and difficulties without fear of criticism, blame, or negative judgment. Such a safe and supportive communication environment enables students to release psychological burdens, reduce stress, and restore emotional stability.

In addition to sharing stories, students also take advantage of direct interactions such as face-to-face meetings and hugs, which are considered more soothing than communication via text or social media. Physical presence provides real comfort, especially in conditions of severe emotional distress. This support is not only emotional, but also often accompanied by practical assistance, such as help with college assignments, so that the combination of emotional communication and tangible assistance strengthens students' resilience in facing pressure and supports their ability to navigate daily challenges.

Picture 1. Diagram of Emotional Support from Close Others



The diagram shows that emotional support from students' closest social circles, namely friends, partners, and family, contributes significantly to their well-being. Friends serve as a place to pour out one's heart and obtain emotional validation, partners not only listen but also provide concrete assistance, while family reinforces students' feelings and decisions. Collectively, these three channels of support maintain students' emotional stability and well-being.

B. Communication as Emotional Venting and Regulation Strategy

Interpersonal communication not only functions as a means of exchanging information, but also as an important mechanism for final-year students to vent their emotions and regulate themselves when facing academic pressure. The interview results show that students who express their feelings through confiding experience a decrease in stress, avoid overthinking, and are able to restore emotional stability. This interaction also facilitates self-reflection, which helps students organize their mindset and work rhythm more rationally. Conversely, burnout affects their communication patterns, making them more concise, sensitive, and pessimistic. These findings confirm that interpersonal communication is the main internal strategy students use to respond to academic pressure, as

reflected in the table containing the initial, axial, and selective codes from the participants' quotes.

Table 4. Initial, axial, and selective codes from Communication as Emotional Ventilation

Initial Codes	Axial Code	Selective Code	Description	Participant Quote
Feeling relieved after confiding	Emotional release	Emotional venting	Communication is seen as a way to "vent" psychological burdens.	*"I feel calmer and more motivated... like my energy has been recharged." (P1)*
Preventing overthinking	Improving self-calmness	Emotional Venting	Communication enables students to think more clearly and rationally.	*"I feel less alone and am starting to get my work rhythm back on track." (P2)*
More open expression during burnout	Changes in speaking style	Emotional Venting	Changes in communication style are reflected in shorter and more sensitive messages.	*"My communication style is shorter... so it's more sensitive and easily misunderstood." (P1).* *"The content of my messages tends to be*

				pessimistic." *(P2)*

Data shows that communication plays an important role as a means of emotional venting for students experiencing stress or burnout. Through activities such as confiding, students can release psychological burdens, gain emotional relief, restore motivation, and feel inner peace and renewed energy. Communication also helps reduce overthinking by providing space to express feelings and receive emotional support, so they do not feel isolated and can reorganize their life rhythm more logically.

"I feel calmer and more motivated... like my energy has been recharged." (P1)

Based on the quote above illustrates that after communicating with significant others, P1 experienced reduced emotional tension and increased motivation. Interpersonal communication produced a restorative effect that helped replenish the psychological energy depleted by academic pressure. In the context of burnout, communication serves as a form of emotional recovery that enables students to regain focus, confidence, and optimism toward their academic tasks.

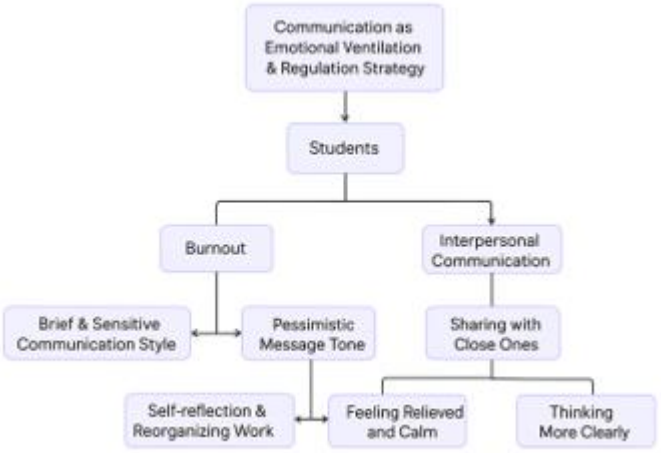
"I feel less alone and am starting to get my work rhythm back on track." (P2)

Based on the quote above demonstrates that interpersonal communication helps alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation, which commonly accompany burnout. The support received through interactions with others enables P2 to reestablish a sense of structure and control over academic activities, improve task management, and restore productivity that had previously been disrupted by stress.

However, when pressure increases, communication patterns can become shorter, more emotional, sensitive, and pessimistic, which can

potentially lead to misunderstandings. These changes reflect the influence of emotional conditions on student interactions and are also indicators of the need for psychological attention. Thus, communication not only functions as a means of expression but also reflects the mental state of students.

Picture 2. Diagram of Communication as Emotional Ventilation and Regulation Strategy



The diagram shows that communication serves as a means of emotional venting and a self-regulation strategy for students experiencing burnout. Emotional pressure is often reflected through changes in communication style that become more concise, sensitive, and pessimistic. In such conditions, interpersonal communication through confiding in close friends helps students manage their emotions constructively, providing a sense of relief, calmness, and clarity of thought. This process encourages self-reflection and helps reorganize the rhythm of academic activities, so that communication plays an important adaptive role in alleviating burnout and improving emotional well-being.

C. Effectiveness of Face-to-Face and Digital Communication Styles

Final year students consciously adjust their communication medium based on their emotional state, urgency, and personal comfort when facing

academic pressure. Face-to-face communication is considered more effective because it can convey emotional expressions fully and reduce the risk of miscommunication. However, digital media such as chat, voice notes, and video calls are still used as flexible alternatives when face-to-face meetings are not possible. The selection and combination of these various communication channels reflect students' adaptive ability to determine efficient communication strategies according to the context.

These findings are summarized in a table containing initial, axial, and selective codes on the theme of "The Effectiveness of Face-to-Face and Digital Communication Styles."

Table 5. Initial, axial, and selective codes from the effectiveness of communication styles

Initial Codes	Axial Code	Selective Code	Description	Participant Quotes
Face-to-face meetings are more effective	Face-to-face meetings are more in-depth	Communication media	Face-to-face interaction allows for deeper dialogue and avoids misunderstandings.	*"Personally, I find it quite difficult to understand explanations when they are only conveyed through writing or chat." (P5)*
Use chat when you're relaxed	Flexibility of digital media	Communication media	Digital media is still used when conditions do not	*"I communicate more often via chat or voice*

			allow for face-to-face meetings.	*notes on WhatsApp." (P2)*
Video calls or voice calls	Combination of media	Communication media	Media choices are tailored to urgency and contextual pressure.	*"Sometimes when I need to have a long conversation, I usually use VC." (P1), "I prefer WhatsApp calls." (P3)*

Data shows that students adaptively choose communication media according to their emotional needs and the situation at hand. Face-to-face communication is considered most effective because it allows for in-depth dialogue, reduces misunderstandings, and conveys messages in their entirety with clear emotional expression.

"Personally, I find it quite difficult to understand explanations when they are only conveyed through writing or chat." (P5)

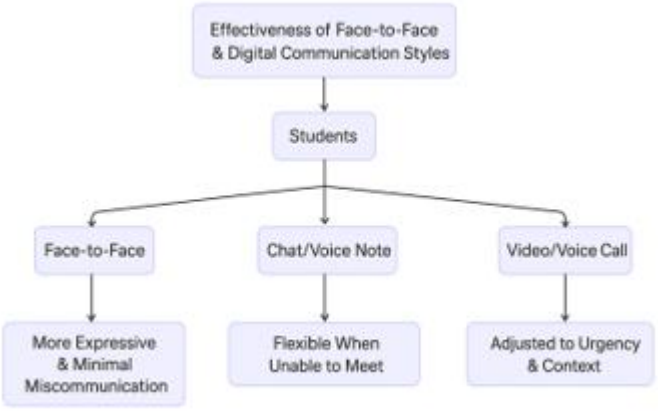
Based on the quote above illustrates that P5 prefers face-to-face communication or forms of interaction that allow direct engagement rather than text-based communication. According to P5, written messages often fail to fully convey context, tone, and emotional expression, thereby increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding. As a result, more personal forms of communication are perceived as more effective for understanding academic information and receiving emotional support.

"I communicate more often via chat or voice notes on WhatsApp." (P2)

Based on the quote above demonstrates that P2 utilizes digital media as a practical and accessible means of communication. Although face-to-face interaction is not always possible, the use of chats and voice notes enables students to maintain social connections, seek support, and discuss academic concerns flexibly despite constraints related to time and distance.

When face-to-face meetings are not possible, students use digital media such as instant messaging or voice messages as practical alternatives, especially in informal situations or situations involving mild emotional pressure. For more personal and in-depth conversations, they prefer voice calls or video calls. This choice of media reflects students' ability to adjust their interpersonal communication strategies based on urgency, psychological conditions, and time and space constraints in order to obtain emotional support.

Picture 3. Diagram of the Effectiveness of Face-to-Face & Digital Communication Stylesy



The diagram shows that the effectiveness of face-to-face and digital communication plays an important role in students' lives. Students choose communication channels according to the context and interpersonal needs. Face-to-face communication is considered expressive and minimizes the risk of

miscommunication through non-verbal elements, while text messages and voice notes are used for flexibility when face-to-face meetings are not possible. Video or voice calls are chosen in situations requiring emotional closeness, while considering distance and time. Thus, students' choice of communication media is based on effectiveness and the conditions they face.

D. The Role of Academic Advisors in Reducing Burnout

In the process of preparing final assignments, academic advisors play an important role not only academically but also in providing emotional support. Students feel helped when lecturers are communicative, provide structured guidance, show empathy, and convey constructive and appreciative comments. This support creates a supportive mentoring atmosphere, increases motivation, reduces pressure, and minimizes symptoms of burnout. A firm but understanding communication style also strengthens students' mental resilience and self-confidence. These findings are summarized in a table containing initial, axial, and selective codes on the theme "The Role of Academic Advisors in Reducing or Exacerbating Burnout."

Table 6. Initial, axial, and selective codes from the Role of Academic Advisors in Reducing Burnout

Initial Codes	Axial Code	Selective Code	Description	Participant Quote
Lecturers provide motivation	Lecturers as a support system	Academic support	Lecturers play a role not only as academic advisors, but also as a source of encouragement.	*"The way he delivers constructive criticism... motivates me." (P1),*

				"My professor is communicative and values my process." (P2)
Firm yet communicative	Clear guidance and empathy	Academic support	The professor's firm yet empathetic communication style actually strengthens students' mental resilience.	*"He said that writing a thesis is not always smooth sailing and that it's okay to take a break." (P2), "My lecturer explains things simply and in an easy-to-understand manner." (P3)*

Data shows that lecturers play an important role as a support system for students, not only in academic aspects but also in maintaining mental health and motivation. Through constructive criticism, appreciation for the learning process, and open, communication, lecturers help students continue to progress, increase their confidence, and prevent feelings of despair amid academic pressure.

"The way he delivers constructive criticism... motivates me." (P1)

Based on the quote above demonstrates that the manner in which lecturers provide feedback significantly influences students' psychological

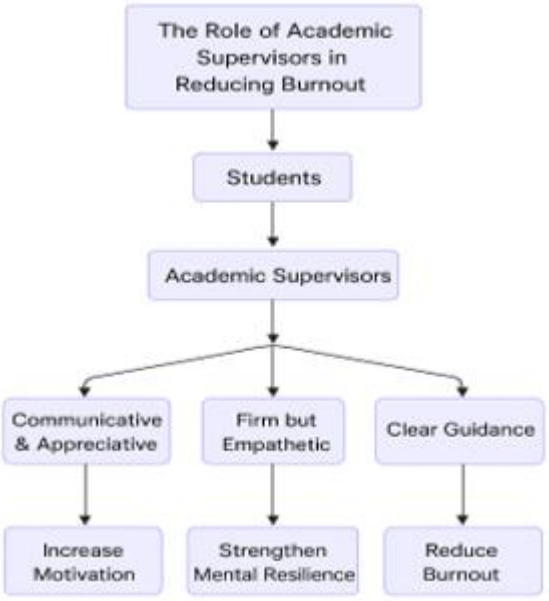
well-being. Constructive criticism is not perceived as negative judgment but rather as valuable guidance that helps students improve. This type of communication enhances motivation and encourages students to continue developing their work without feeling discouraged or overwhelmed.

"My professor is communicative and values my process." (P2)

Based on the quote above suggests that students appreciate lecturers who actively engage in communication and recognize their learning efforts rather than focusing solely on final outcomes. Such an approach makes students feel acknowledged, supported, and less isolated in facing academic challenges, thereby reducing the pressure that often contributes to burnout.

The lecturers' firm yet empathetic communication style strengthens students' mental resilience. Clear and empathetic guidance makes students understand that failure and obstacles are a natural part of the learning process, so they feel accompanied, not judged. The delivery of simple and easy-to-understand material creates comfortable and supportive interactions, making the role of lecturers crucial in supporting academic achievement while maintaining students' emotional stability.

Picture 4. Diagram of the Role of Academic Advisors in Reducing Burnout



The diagram illustrates the strategic role of academic advisors in reducing student burnout. Through open communication, an appreciative attitude, and positive interactions, lecturers increase motivation and provide emotional reinforcement. Firmness accompanied by empathy helps build students' mental resilience to manage academic pressure. In addition, systematic and clear guidance makes it easier for students to understand academic goals and take the right steps, so that guidance becomes more structured and effective in reducing the symptoms of burnout.

E. Negative Effects of Ineffective Communication

Although interpersonal communication has the potential to relieve stress and burnout, interviews show that ineffective communication actually worsens students' psychological conditions, especially when facing the pressure of final assignments. Blaming comments, inappropriate jokes, and role imbalances in group work are factors that add to emotional pressure, disrupt concentration, and reduce enthusiasm. These findings confirm that communication that lacks

empathy or is not contextually appropriate can trigger burnout rather than provide support. All data are summarized in a table containing initial, axial, and selective codes on the theme of "Negative Effects of Ineffective Communication."

Table 7. Initial, axial, and selective codes from the Negative Effects of Ineffective Communication

Initial Codes	Axial Code	Selective Code	Description	Participant Quote
Feeling judged when confiding	Unconstructive comments	Negative communication	Blameful responses only worsen burnout.	*"I feel worse... the response blames me." (P2)* *"Unconstructive comments make me feel even more depressed." (P1)*
Inappropriate jokes when stressed	Distractions	Negative communication	Untimely communication hinders the burnout recovery process.	*"When asked to have a serious conversation, they often joke around... causing me to lose focus." (P3)*
Passive friends in group work	One-sided communication burden	Negative communication	The lack of fair role distribution makes communication	*"They seem unwilling to start unless I do first... I end up*

			a source of stress.	*doing most of the work." (P5)*

Data shows that negative communication can worsen students' emotional state, especially when facing pressure or burnout. One form of this is the " " where students feel judged when they try to express their feelings, receiving blaming or destructive comments. Such responses hinder recovery and deepen the psychological pressure experienced by students.

"I feel worse... the response blames me." (P2)

Based on the quote above indicates that blame-oriented responses can exacerbate students' emotional distress. Rather than feeling supported, the student experiences increased pressure and frustration, making it more difficult to cope with burnout.

"Unconstructive comments make me feel even more depressed." (P1)

Based on the quote above suggests that negative or non-supportive feedback can weaken students' emotional resilience. Comments that lack empathy or practical guidance may deepen feelings of discouragement and helplessness, thereby worsening the psychological effects of academic burnout.

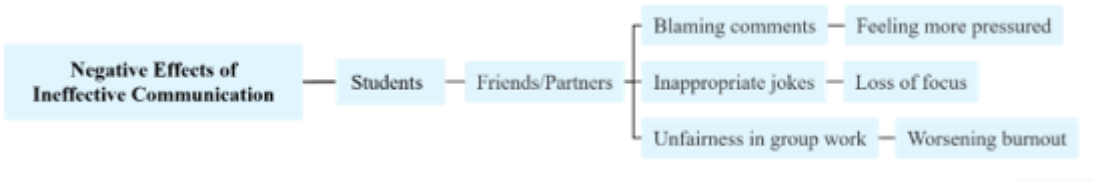
"When asked to have a serious conversation, they often joke around... causing me to lose focus." (P3)

Based on the quote above demonstrates that inappropriate communication responses can undermine the effectiveness of emotional support. When serious concerns are met with humor or dismissed casually, students may feel misunderstood and unsupported, which can interfere with emotional regulation and concentration on academic tasks.

Inappropriate jokes can interfere with students' mental recovery, as they

distract them and diminish their sense of being valued when they are expressing serious or emotional matters. This creates feelings of being misunderstood and inhibits emotional expression. Negative communication also arises in group work when the workload is uneven; students often have to take on additional responsibilities due to passive team members, causing physical fatigue and emotional stress. This pattern of unconstructive and unempathetic communication has the potential to exacerbate academic stress and hinder recovery from burnout.

Picture 5. Diagram of the Negative Effects of Ineffective Communication



The diagram shows that ineffective communication in the student environment, especially between friends or coworkers, has a negative impact on mental health and academic achievement. Blaming comments increase psychological pressure, while inappropriate humor disrupts academic concentration. Task imbalance and lack of coordination in group work also exacerbate burnout. Thus, ineffective communication disrupts cooperation while worsening students' emotional conditions.

To understand the experiences and perceptions of final-year students regarding interpersonal communication in dealing with burnout, researchers used visual analysis in the form of word cloud mapping from interview transcripts. This word cloud helps identify the most frequently used words, providing initial indications of dominant themes, both emotionally and conceptually.

Picture 6. Word Cloud of the Form and Meaning of Interpersonal Communication in dealing

with academic burnout

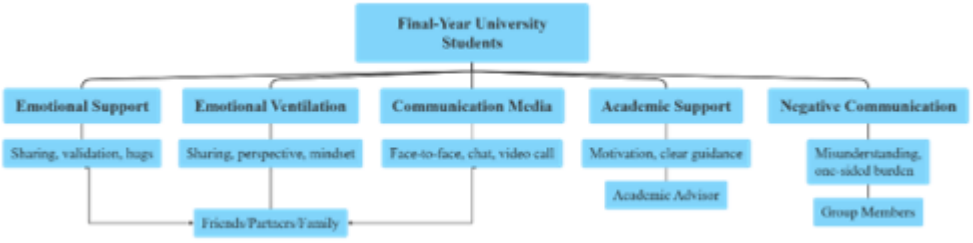


The word cloud shows the dominant keywords in the narratives of final-year students regarding communication with those closest to them. Words such as *"I," "feel," "can," "calm," and "need"* emphasize the personal and emotional dimensions of interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, terms such as "*chat," "partner," "best friend," and "lecturer"* reflect the parties who are sources of emotional support. This visualization confirms that communication is not only about exchanging information, but also plays a role in stabilizing emotions, providing inner peace, moral support, and emotional validation, especially when facing academic pressures such as writing a thesis and concerns about the future.

The word cloud also displays vocabulary that reflects efforts to create healthy communication, such as "*communication," "understanding," "appreciating," and "building,"* indicating students' awareness of the importance of supportive interpersonal relationships. However, negative words such *as "no," "fear," "judged," and "pessimistic"* also appear, indicating unpleasant communication experiences. In addition, terms such as *"chat," "WhatsApp," "phone," and "voice note"* highlight the important role of digital media in expressing oneself when face-to-face interaction is not possible. Overall, these

findings confirm that interpersonal communication is an essential need for final-year students, both as an emotional outlet, a source of social support, and a mechanism for maintaining mental health amid academic pressure.

Picture 7. Conceptual Diagram of the Forms and Meanings of Interpersonal Communication in Coping with Academic Burnout



The diagram shows that final-year students use interpersonal communication as an adaptive strategy to cope with academic pressure. Emotional support from friends, partners, or family through confiding, validation of feelings, and hugs helps them feel understood and reduces loneliness. Communication also serves as an emotional outlet, allowing students to express their thoughts, discuss, and evaluate their mindset to gain constructive perspectives and relieve psychological pressure.

Students utilize various communication channels, such as face-to-face meetings, chat, and video calls, tailored to their needs and situations; face-to-face meetings are considered most effective for conveying complete expressions, while digital media provides flexibility. Academic advisors play an important role by providing motivation and systematic guidance so that students can manage their final assignments and academic pressure in a structured manner. Conversely, negative communication, such as miscommunication or uneven distribution of group tasks, can worsen emotional conditions and increase stress. These findings emphasize the importance of constructive interpersonal communication to support students' psychological resilience and healthy

adaptation to academic pressure.

In line with previous findings, this section presents data on the frequency of interview results to highlight the urgency of constructive interpersonal communication as an adaptive strategy for dealing with academic pressure. The frequency table contains the intensity and context of the use of various forms of interpersonal communication by final-year students, reflecting the relevance and significance of communication in their experience of burnout. This presentation aims to describe the patterns of themes that emerged during the interviews.

Table 8. Frequency of Mention of Interpersonal Communication as a Solution to Burnout

No	Main Theme	Frequency of Mention	Participants Who Mentioned
	Emotional Release	8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
2	Support System	10	P1, P2, P4, P5, P3
3	Problem Solving	9	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
4	Recharging Spirit	7	P1, P2, P3, P4

The high frequency of a theme's appearance indicates that it was frequently discussed by participants, while the number of participants who mentioned it reflects the collective reach of the experience. The combination of the intensity of occurrence and the number of participants is an important indicator for assessing the significance and strength of the findings. The following section will review each theme in depth, accompanied by participant quotes to illustrate the context, meaning, and role of interpersonal communication in coping with and alleviating academic burnout.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that interpersonal communication is the main adaptive mechanism in overcoming burnout among final-year students. Emotional support from friends, partners, family, and academic advisors helps stabilize psychological conditions through validation of feelings, concrete assistance, and continuous motivation. These results are in line with *Social Support Theory*, which emphasizes that emotional, informational, and instrumental support is effective in reducing the impact of prolonged stress (Berger et al., 2023; Kushendar & Maba, 2022). More specifically, these findings support the study (Nadira et al., 2024) which shows that low social support correlates with high academic burnout among final-year medical students.

More than just emotional release, interpersonal communication also functions as a means of self-regulation and cognitive reflection. Storytelling or confiding in others has been proven to help reduce overthinking, restore motivation, and rearrange academic rhythms. These findings are relevant to *Psychological Resilience Theory*, which states that emotional resilience can be built through shared narratives and mutual support (Zhu et al., 2023). Thus, communication acts as a non-clinical therapeutic space that allows students to process burnout constructively.

Additionally, the effectiveness of communication is influenced by the choice of medium used. Students prefer face-to-face communication for expressive emotional closeness, but switch to digital media such as voice notes or video calls when time and distance become constraints. This reinforces the view that interpersonal communication is dynamic and contextual, and can be mediated by various channels as long as feedback remains direct (Joseph A. DeVito, 2016). These findings also support research (Lin et al., 2024) which confirms that communication flexibility contributes to psychological well-being

during intense academic pressure.

The role of academic advisors has been proven to be an important factor in alleviating burnout among final-year students. Empathetic and constructive criticism not only facilitates the completion of final assignments but also provides a sense of human appreciation. These findings support the study (Sedhom et al., 2022) which shows that a supportive professional communication style can reduce emotional exhaustion. Conversely, negative communication such as blaming comments or inappropriate jokes actually exacerbates psychological pressure, in line with the findings of (Putri et al., 2023) that poor interpersonal interactions trigger depersonalization and decreased academic motivation.

Contemporary research indicates that interpersonal communication functions as a primary coping mechanism for reducing burnout among final-year students by providing emotional support, facilitating emotional regulation, enabling problem-solving, and strengthening psychological resilience. These findings reinforce Social Support Theory, which conceptualizes emotional, informational, and instrumental support as social resources capable of mitigating the effects of prolonged stress. However, the study demonstrates that not all forms of communication are equally effective. Communication characterized by emotional validation, empathy, and non-judgmental responses is more effective in alleviating burnout than communication involving blame, inappropriate humor, or responses that dismiss individual emotions. This finding aligns with DeVito's interpersonal communication model, which emphasizes empathy, openness, and support as essential elements of healthy interpersonal relationships. In contrast, negative communication increases psychological distress and intensifies feelings of being misunderstood.

The findings are also consistent with previous studies showing that emotional support from peers and family members plays a significant role in reducing burnout and enhancing students' psychological well-being. The role of peers as a safe space for sharing experiences supports the findings of (Cassaretto, Espinosa, et al., 2024; Cassaretto, Pérez-Aranibar, et al., 2024; Kim & Lee, 2022), who reported that social support strengthens students' capacity to adapt to academic pressures. Nevertheless, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that the benefits of social support derive not only from the presence of social networks but also from the quality of communication within those relationships. In other words, social support becomes effective when it is expressed through communication that provides emotional validation and a sense of acceptance.

From the perspective of Psychological Resilience Theory, interpersonal communication not only enables students to release emotional tension but also facilitates self-reflection, allowing them to construct meaning, reorganize academic strategies, and restore motivation. These findings suggest that psychological resilience is not merely an individual attribute but also a relational outcome developed through supportive social interactions. Consequently, resilience emerges through shared narratives, reciprocal support, and communication experiences that foster psychological safety.

Contextual factors also influence communication effectiveness. Within the Indonesian academic culture, where lecturer–student relationships often reflect relatively high hierarchical distance, empathetic, communicative, and process-oriented supervision serves as a protective factor against burnout. Conversely, supervisory relationships that are excessively formal, provide limited feedback, or focus primarily on criticism may increase academic anxiety. These findings

indicate that the quality of lecturer–student relationships influences not only academic progress but also students' mental health. Furthermore, the widespread use of digital media such as WhatsApp, voice notes, and video calls suggests that students have developed hybrid communication strategies to maintain social support when face-to-face interaction is not feasible. Nevertheless, face-to-face communication remains more effective in conveying empathy and emotional validation because it incorporates nonverbal cues that digital media cannot fully replicate.

This study extends the student burnout literature by demonstrating that interpersonal communication is not merely a channel for information exchange or a passive form of social support, but rather an active relational process that shapes emotional regulation, psychological resilience, and students' ability to adapt to academic pressures. These findings suggest that burnout prevention strategies in higher education should move beyond formal counseling services and emphasize the development of supportive communication ecosystems through peer relationships, academic mentoring, and empathetic communication practices between lecturers and students while maintaining consistency with Social Support Theory, Psychological Resilience Theory, and prior findings by (Cassaretto, Espinosa, et al., 2024; Cassaretto, Pérez-Aranibar, et al., 2024; Kim & Lee, 2022).

Overall, interpersonal communication in this study functions in three dimensions: emotional venting, social support, and problem-solving strategies. These three functions are intertwined to form a psychological ecosystem that maintains emotional stability while supporting academic productivity. Unlike previous studies that emphasized self-efficacy or social support in quantitative terms (Mella Aprilia Andini, Amanda Pasca Rini, 2024), this study contributes

new insights by interpreting interpersonal communication as a dynamic and contextual relational experience.

Thus, this study not only strengthens existing theory but also expands the understanding that interpersonal communication is *a non-clinical coping mechanism* that is easily accessible, resource-efficient, and has significant psychological impacts when implemented in a supportive manner. The practical implication is the need for educational institutions to design interpersonal relationship-based support such as peer counseling, dialogic reflection groups, or empathetic communication training for lecturers as part of a burnout prevention strategy in higher education.

5. Conslusion

This study demonstrates that interpersonal communication serves as a critical adaptive mechanism in helping final-year students cope with academic burnout. Supportive interactions with friends, family members, romantic partners, and academic advisors provide emotional validation, opportunities for emotional expression, practical assistance, and constructive guidance that collectively help students regulate emotions, restore motivation, and strengthen psychological resilience. Conversely, ineffective communication characterized by blame, dismissive responses, inappropriate humor, and unequal interpersonal relationships may intensify psychological distress and hinder burnout recovery. These findings reinforce Social Support Theory, Psychological Resilience Theory, and DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Model by highlighting the central role of interpersonal communication not only as a channel for information exchange but also as a coping resource that facilitates emotional recovery, social connectedness, and adaptive problem-solving.

The findings offer several practical implications for higher education institutions. Universities should establish structured peer-support programs that enable final-year students to share experiences, discuss academic challenges, and receive emotional validation from fellow students facing similar pressures. Institutions should also develop mentoring systems that connect students with trained academic mentors or senior students who can provide guidance, encouragement, and regular check-ins throughout the thesis completion process. In addition, universities should integrate communication-based interventions into student support services, including reflective discussion groups, interpersonal communication workshops, active-listening training, and empathy-based counseling programs. Academic advisors should receive professional development training focused on constructive feedback delivery, empathetic communication, and supportive supervision practices to create a more psychologically supportive learning environment.

This study contributes theoretically by extending burnout literature beyond traditional psychological and variable-centered explanations and positioning interpersonal communication as a dynamic and context-dependent coping mechanism. The findings suggest that communication processes function simultaneously as sources of emotional support, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and resilience development among final-year students.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved only five participants, which limits the breadth of experiences represented in the findings. Second, all participants were recruited from a single institution, namely Dr. Soetomo University, Surabaya, which may limit the

transferability of the findings to other higher education contexts with different academic cultures and student characteristics. Third, the study relied on self-reported experiences obtained through interviews, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and recall bias. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple universities, incorporate mixed-method or longitudinal designs, and further examine how face-to-face and digital interpersonal communication contribute to burnout management and psychological resilience across different academic environments.

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