

## **A Critical Evaluation of Multidimensional Communication Barriers: Reconstructing the Role of Academic Advisors and Parents in Mitigating Student Dropout**

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how multidimensional communication barriers among students, academic advisors, and parents contribute to academic leave and dropout in the D3 English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Madiun. Using a qualitative case study design, the research explored three key concepts: sociological distance, expectation mismatch, and triadic communication breakdown through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and academic record review. The data were analyzed interpretively using NVivo 12. The findings show that academic leave and dropout risk are caused not only by academic difficulty but also by failures of meaning coordination and weak empathic communication. The study recommends a multidimensional collaborative communication model that strengthens preventive communication, empathetic advising, and sustained parental involvement as a strategy to mitigate academic leave and dropout risk in vocational higher education

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Student retention and dropout prevention are widely recognized as key indicators of higher education success in various global contexts (Tinto, 2017; Tight, 2022). In Indonesia, the phenomenon of students taking academic leave and eventually dropping out remains a serious challenge across higher education institutions. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the annual national dropout rate ranges from approximately 3% to 5%, with substantial variation across institutions and study programs (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). In the D3 English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Madiun, this issue is not merely a matter of statistics; rather, it reflects the complex realities that students face as they navigate their higher education journey.

Many students continue to struggle to adapt to the academic climate of higher education. In particular, in vocational settings, the transition into college life often brings a set of demands that differ significantly from students' previous educational experiences. Students are expected to manage their academic responsibilities independently, meet institutional expectations, and remain motivated despite personal, social, and economic pressures. In many cases, these challenges gradually contribute to academic disengagement, leave of absence, and ultimately dropout.

At the same time, today's students are shaped by the realities of the digital era. The use of digital devices and technology in completing academic tasks has become an unavoidable part of student life, especially for Generation Z. Social pressures from peer groups, financial demands, and family expectations also influence how students respond to academic challenges. Within this context, students do not experience study barriers solely as academic difficulties, but as part of a broader set of relational and communicative tensions.

In the English Study Program, lecturers and academic advisors have attempted to support students through humanistic approaches, inclusive advising spaces, and communication with parents. However, these efforts have not yet been fully effective in reducing dropout rates or addressing declining student motivation. This suggests that the issue may not lie in students' academic abilities, but also in how communication occurs among the actors in the academic support system.

This situation is further complicated by fragmented communication and a lack of shared understanding among students, lecturers, academic advisors, and parents. Many patterns of interaction that influence students' academic persistence remain insufficiently understood. As a result, communication barriers that appear minor at first may develop into larger and more entrenched problems over time.

### **Research Gap**

Despite extensive research on student retention and dropout, existing studies often focus on individual academic factors—such as grades, attendance, and academic preparedness—without adequately examining the relational and communicative dimensions that shape students' decisions to persist or withdraw. Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration emphasizes the importance of

academic and social integration, yet most institutional interventions remain centered on academic support rather than interpersonal communication processes.

Furthermore, while studies have explored the role of academic advisors and lecturers in supporting student persistence (Drake, 2011; Karp et al., 2010), there is limited understanding of how communication patterns among multiple stakeholders—students, lecturers, academic advisors, and parents—interact to influence students' academic motivation and persistence. The coordination of meaning, as conceptualized in the CMM framework (Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Barge & Little, 2020), remains underexplored in higher education retention studies, particularly in Indonesian vocational contexts.

Additionally, the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z students—shaped by digital immersion, social pressures, and expectations of immediacy (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Twenge, 2017)—create new communicative challenges that traditional advising approaches may not address. The gap between students' expectations and the reality of academic life is often exacerbated by fragmented communication among key actors (Braxton et al., 2014). Yet, few studies have systematically examined how these multidimensional communication barriers form and interact within the higher education support system.

### **Purpose**

Against this background, the present study aims to examine how multidimensional communication barriers form and interact, thereby weakening students' motivation to continue their studies. The study is grounded in the argument that academic leave and dropout should not be understood solely as individual academic failure, but as outcomes shaped by relational, social, and communicative dynamics within the higher education environment. Cranton (2006) argues that a transformative approach to higher education requires a reconstruction of the relationship between educators and learners—an insight that guides this study's focus on communication restructuring.

Specifically, this study seeks to:

- a. Identify the types and sources of communication barriers experienced among students, academic advisors, and parents in the D3 English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Madiun.
- b. Analyze how these communication barriers interact and accumulate, contributing to students' academic disengagement and decisions to take leave or drop out.
- c. Propose a multidimensional collaborative communication model that strengthens preventive communication, empathetic advising, and sustained parental involvement as a strategy to mitigate academic leave and dropout risk in vocational higher education.

By drawing on the CMM framework and situating the analysis within the context of Generation Z learners and Indonesian vocational higher education, this study aims to offer both theoretical insights and practical strategies to reduce dropout through improved communication.

## **Contribution**

This study offers several contributions to both theory and practice in higher education retention research:

### **a. Integrates Communication Theory into Student Retention Studies**

Most existing research on student retention focuses on individual, psychological, or academic factors. This study extends the literature by applying the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) developed by Pearce and Cronen (1980) to analyze how communication processes among students, academic advisors, and parents shape students' academic persistence. As Pearce (2007) emphasizes, communication creates social worlds rather than merely describing them. By foregrounding communication as a central mechanism in retention, this research offers a relational and process-oriented perspective that complements dominant models of student integration (Tinto, 1993; Kuh et al., 2006). This integration provides a more holistic understanding of how meaning coordination—or its failure—influences students' decisions to persist or withdraw.

### **b. Addresses Context-Specific Gaps in Indonesian Vocational Higher Education**

While much of the literature on student retention originates from Western contexts, this study examines the unique communicative challenges faced by students in Indonesian vocational higher education. The triadic communication dynamics among students, academic advisors, and parents operate within distinct cultural, institutional, and generational conditions that have received limited scholarly attention. The findings are expected to provide contextualized insights that can inform policy and practice in similar institutional settings, particularly those serving Generation Z students with distinct learning and communication preferences (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Twenge, 2017). By situating the analysis within the Indonesian vocational context, this study contributes to a more geographically and institutionally diverse body of retention research.

### **c. Proposes a Practical Model for Reconstructing Academic Support Systems**

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study generates actionable recommendations for restructuring communication among stakeholders in the academic support ecosystem. Drawing on Rogers's (1961) humanistic approach and its contemporary applications in educational settings (Hughey, 2011; Murphy & Joseph, 2019), the study recommends developing a multidimensional collaborative communication model that integrates three main components: (1) a preventive communication system that schedules regular meetings among students, academic advisors, and parents before problems emerge; (2) empathetic communication training for academic advisors so they can effectively carry out their role as humanistic facilitators; and (3) an information platform that provides parents with real-time access to their children's academic progress. Such a model may serve not only as a strategy to mitigate dropout risk but also as a means to strengthen academic support systems in higher education, particularly within vocational institutions facing the distinctive challenges of Generation Z students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Student persistence in higher education has long been understood as closely related to the quality of students' academic and social integration. Tinto (1993), through his theory of student integration, argues that students' success in completing their studies is strongly influenced by the degree to which they are academically and socially integrated into their institution. Students who fail to establish meaningful connections with their academic environment are more likely to leave higher education. In the same vein, Kuh et al. (2006) emphasize that student engagement is a strong predictor of both retention and academic success.

The difficulties students face in adapting to higher education are also linked to their level of preparedness for the transition from secondary school to university. Yorke and Longden (2008) identify students' unpreparedness for this transition as one of the key factors behind dropout. Limited frames of reference and weak academic literacy further constrain students' ability to navigate university life, often due to inadequate communication with the institution. This suggests that dropout is not merely a matter of academic performance, but also of students' ability to interpret and respond to the expectations of higher education.

Another important issue highlighted in the literature is the mismatch between students' expectations and the reality of academic life. Braxton et al. (2014) argue that the gap between expectation and academic reality is a significant factor in students' decisions to leave higher education. Many students enter college with idealized assumptions about flexibility, independence, and campus life, only to encounter demanding academic routines, institutional rules, and vocational workloads that require sustained discipline.

The distinctive characteristics of Generation Z further shape this experience. Seemiller and Grace (2016) describe Generation Z as true digital natives with unique ways of learning and interacting, while Twenge (2017) notes that contemporary social pressures may encourage more pragmatic and immediate responses to challenges. In academic settings, these conditions may influence how students manage pressure, motivation, and responsibility, including the temptation to seek shortcuts when facing demanding coursework.

Within the institutional context, academic advisors and lecturers play a central role in building student support systems. Drake (2011) shows that humanistic approaches, inclusive advising practices, and strong communication with families can strengthen students' academic resilience. Karp et al. (2010) similarly stress the importance of academic literacy, effective advising, and intensive communication between institutions and families in supporting student persistence.

To understand why these support systems do not always function effectively, this study draws on the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) developed by Pearce and Cronen (1980). CMM explains that effective communication depends on the coordination of meaning among the parties involved. Without such coordination, each actor may construct a one-sided interpretation of the same situation, thereby hindering mutual

understanding and effective academic guidance. Barge and Little (2020) add that effective communication depends on the coordination of meaning among the parties involved. Furthermore, Pearce (2007) extends the original CMM framework by emphasizing that communication creates social worlds rather than merely describing them. In the context of academic advising, this means that the conversations between students, advisors, and parents actively construct, or fail to construct, a supportive academic environment.

This study is also informed by Cranton's (2006) view that a transformative approach to higher education requires a reconstruction of the relationship between educators and learners. In this context, optimizing a humanistic approach by restructuring interpersonal communication patterns offers a strategic way to identify and address the barriers that students in the D3 English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Madiun face.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative case study design. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that case studies allow researchers to explore a phenomenon in depth within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This design was selected because the study aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the communication barriers students at risk of dropout experience in their natural setting.

The study involved three main participant groups: students in the D3 English Study Program who were identified as experiencing academic difficulties or being at risk of dropout, academic advisors, and representatives of students' parents. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, which Patton (2015) describes as a strategy for selecting participants based on specific criteria in order to obtain rich and relevant data aligned with the focus of the study.

The criteria for selecting student participants were based on academic records indicating learning barriers, such as a semester GPA below 2.75 for two consecutive semesters, absences exceeding 25% of scheduled class meetings, or a history of applying for academic leave. Based on these criteria, the study included 8 students, 4 academic advisors, and 6 parents as informants.

Data were collected through three main techniques. First, participant observation was conducted to examine the interaction dynamics between students and academic advisors during advising sessions. According to Spradley (2016), participant observation enables researchers to understand the meaning behind behavior and interaction in natural settings. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with all three groups of informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the academic barriers students encountered. Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasize that in-depth interviews are particularly useful for uncovering how participants understand and interpret their lived experiences. Third, students' academic records were used as secondary data to complement and verify the information obtained from the interviews.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed source triangulation by cross-checking information from students, academic advisors, and parents. Korstjens and Moser (2018) argue that triangulation is one of the key strategies for strengthening trustworthiness in qualitative research. Through this process, the researcher was able to compare and confirm findings from multiple perspectives.

The data were analyzed using an interpretive qualitative approach with NVivo version 12. The analysis followed the stages proposed by Miles et al. (2014), namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. NVivo assisted the researcher in organizing the data, developing codes, and systematically mapping clusters of communication barriers.

## RESEARCH RESULT

The data analysis revealed that three interrelated clusters shaped the multidimensional communication barriers experienced by students at risk of dropout. These findings emerged from a combination of participant observation during advising sessions, in-depth interviews with students, academic advisors, and parents, as well as a systematic review of academic documents and institutional records.

### Sociological Distance

The first cluster highlights a significant sociological distance between students and the higher education institution. The finding shows that students from families with limited higher-education cultural capital often feel alienated from the culture and values of academic life. Academic terminology, administrative procedures, and behavioral expectations on campus can feel like a "foreign language" that they do not fully understand.

Observations during advising sessions revealed that the relationship between academic advisors and students remains strongly hierarchical. Students consistently displayed formal, passive, and distanced attitudes when interacting with their academic advisors. They rarely posed questions or expressed disagreement, even when they did not fully understand the guidance. Furthermore, students appeared hesitant to contact their academic advisors outside of officially scheduled consultation hours. These behavioral patterns reflect a significant power distance and accessibility barriers embedded within the academic relationship, suggesting that students perceive their academic advisors as authority figures rather than approachable mentors.

One student informant (M3) explained:

*"I often get confused by campus terms like credit units, GPA, or course registration. At home, there is no one I can ask because I am the first in my family to go to college. So, I usually choose to stay quiet rather than ask questions and look stupid."*

This distance is not only cognitive but also emotional. Several student informants described feeling uncomfortable or hesitant to consult their academic advisors because they perceived a status gap between them. The students from working-class families often experience a cultural mismatch with the independent values that tend to dominate higher education.

The documentation analysis further corroborated these observational findings. A review of institutional documents revealed that a formal, bureaucratic framework governs the relationship between academic advisors and students. Official appointment letters position academic advisors primarily as evaluators and students as subjects to be assessed, thereby institutionalizing an asymmetrical power relationship from the outset. Academic advising records indicated a notably low frequency of meetings between advisors and students, with consultations predominantly administrative in nature, focusing on course registration, GPA verification, and procedural compliance rather than holistic academic mentoring. Moreover, the academic guidelines reviewed did not contain specific provisions regarding ideal communication patterns or mentoring approaches. The absence of regulations that encourage more egalitarian interactions perpetuates the sociological distance between the parties, making it structurally difficult for students to perceive their advisors as accessible sources of support.

As a result, academic problems that could have been addressed at an early stage are often left unresolved until they become far more difficult to manage. One academic advisor (D2) reflected:

*"Quite often, I only find out a student is in trouble when their grades have already dropped dramatically. If they had come earlier, there are many things we could have helped with."*

### **Mismatch of Academic Expectations**

The second cluster identifies a sharp gap between students' expectations of college life and the realities they encounter. It relates to psychological factors, including expectations and satisfaction, in shaping students' decisions to remain in or leave higher education.

Observations conducted during advising sessions and classroom interactions revealed a mismatch in academic expectations between academic advisors and students. Academic advisors consistently demonstrated high standards for academic achievement and expected students to engage in independent, self-directed learning. Students, however, anticipated more intensive guidance and detailed, step-by-step instructions from their advisors. During consultation sessions, miscommunication was frequent: advisors tended to provide general, conceptual advice, while students expected specific, technical directions that could be applied immediately to their coursework. A divergence in academic priorities was also evident—advisors emphasized deep mastery of subject matter and intellectual development, whereas students appeared more focused on task completion and timely graduation. These differing orientations created a persistent communicative gap that hindered the effectiveness of the advising process.

Many students entered college with the assumption that university life would be more flexible and relaxed than secondary school. Informant M5 shared:

*"I thought college would be more relaxed, that I could manage my own time. However, the schedule is packed, the assignments are overwhelming, and you have to be disciplined. It's very different from what I imagined."*

More importantly, the data suggest that students interpret academic difficulties as personal failure. They blame themselves for being unable to adapt, without recognizing that the challenges they face are also structural. The individuals' interpretations of success or failure significantly influence their motivation and subsequent behavior.

The documentation analysis provided additional evidence of this mismatch in expectation. A review of student academic transcripts revealed patterns of performance that frequently fell short of advisor expectations, characterized by recurring absences and failure to complete assignments within stipulated deadlines. These patterns indicate a fundamental divergence in perspectives regarding the direction of academic development. Advising evaluation records documented advisors' concerns about students' lack of initiative and inadequate preparation for coursework. Conversely, documented student complaints indicated that many students felt they had not received sufficient clarification of the academic expectations they were required to meet. Furthermore, the existing academic guidelines lacked measurable indicators of advising success, leaving no shared reference point to align perceptions between advisors and students. This absence of explicit, mutually understood benchmarks exacerbates the expectation gap and contributes to mutual frustration on both sides of the advising relationship.

On the other hand, academic advisors tend to interpret the same phenomenon as a sign of students' limited adjustment to the culture of higher education. One advisor (D1) stated:

*"Students today are often not mentally prepared for college. They still carry over their high school habits of being spoon-fed. Here, they are expected to be independent."*

This difference in interpretation creates a communication gap that hinders the advising process and causes a mismatch in academic expectations.

### **Disintegration of the Triadic Communication Network**

The third, and most crucial cluster, is the disintegration of communication within the triadic network connecting students, academic advisors, and parents. The findings show that administrative routines and problem-based intervention have largely dominated communication. In other words, communication tends to occur only when an urgent problem has already emerged.

Observations revealed that the triadic communication network among academic advisors, students, and parents has experienced significant disintegration. Communication among the three parties operates in fragmented, uncoordinated channels. Academic advisors interact with students only during formal consultation sessions, without involving parents in the monitoring of academic progress. Parents, in turn, typically obtain information about their children's academic standing solely from the students themselves – information that is often incomplete or deliberately concealed when problems arise. Notably, observations confirmed the absence of any regular forum or structured meeting that brings all three parties together simultaneously. As a result, each party holds different perceptions and expectations of the student's academic achievements,

leading to a fundamental misalignment that undermines the potential for coordinated support.

Parents, who should be among the key nodes in the student's support network, often have limited access to information about their child's academic progress. This runs counter to Epstein's (2011) principle of family engagement as an essential component of educational success. One parent informant (O3) said:

*"I only found out my child was having problems in college when I received a letter from the campus. Until then, I thought everything was fine because I hadn't heard anything."*

The documentation analysis further substantiated the observed disintegration of the triadic communication network. A review of institutional documents revealed the absence of any formal mechanism designed to connect academic advisors, students, and parents within an integrated communication system. The academic guidelines examined contained no provisions regarding parental involvement in the academic advising process, effectively excluding parents from institutional recognition as stakeholders in their children's education, and advising records documented only dyadic interactions between advisors and students, with no designated space for parental input or information sharing. Additionally, no system of periodic reporting to parents on students' academic progress was found. Perhaps most tellingly, complaint documentation revealed that parents typically became aware of their children's academic difficulties only when situations had reached critical stages—such as imminent dropout or significant delays in graduation. This pattern of delayed communication deprives families of the opportunity to provide timely support and intervention.

As a consequence, the support that could have been provided earlier is delayed and becomes less effective. The absence of a structured, preventive, and relationship-based communication mechanism further aggravates this situation. Early detection of students' academic barriers is often delayed. By the time the problem is finally identified, the student's motivation to learn has already declined significantly, and taking academic leave or dropping out begins to seem like the most reasonable option.

One academic advisor (D4) acknowledged the limitations of the current system:

*"We actually want to involve parents more intensively, but there is no system that supports it. Communication with parents usually only happens when things have already reached an emergency point."*

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings on sociological distance and the disintegration of communication help explain why the current academic advising approach has not yet been fully effective. Communication within the student-advisor-parent triad remains largely formal and administrative, rather than empathetic and relational, fostering a genuine sense of belonging. Strayhorn (2019) argues that a sense of belonging is a fundamental student need and is strongly associated with retention and academic success. When students do not feel that they are part of the academic community, their motivation to persist naturally weakens.

In many cases, academic advisors become confined to the role of administrative gatekeepers, ensuring that students meet formal requirements, rather than serving as mentors who understand the personal and social dimensions of students' lives. Lowenstein (2005), as elaborated by He & Huston (2016), distinguishes between prescriptive advising, which is directive and administrative, and developmental advising, which focuses on students' holistic growth. The findings of this study suggest that the prescriptive model still dominates academic advising practices in the research setting.

The sharp expectation mismatch identified in this study also helps explain students' limited adaptation and low academic literacy. The culture of instant gratification often associated with Generation Z (Twenge, 2017), combined with a pragmatic orientation toward work that leads many students to take on part-time employment, encourages them to prioritize activities outside the academic sphere. When they are confronted with the intensive discipline and workload characteristic of vocational higher education, many experience a form of reality shock that can ultimately lead them to withdraw from the educational process.

This phenomenon can also be understood through Merton's (1957) concept of anticipatory socialization, as elaborated by Weidman et al. (2014). Students form expectations about college life based on the information they receive before entering higher education - information that is often incomplete or inaccurate. When reality fails to meet these expectations, cognitive dissonance arises, often leading to dissatisfaction and a desire to leave.

The perspective of *Coordinated Management of Meaning* (CMM), developed by Pearce and Cronen (1980), offers a particularly relevant theoretical lens for understanding this phenomenon. From a CMM perspective, the communication barriers identified in this study arise from a failure to coordinate meaning. Each actor - students, academic advisors, and parents - brings a different interpretive framework to the same academic problem. Students tend to see it as a personal burden; academic advisors interpret it as a sign of student unpreparedness. At the same time, parents often lack sufficient information to form a full understanding of the situation. Without a dialogic process of negotiating meaning, each party operates within its own interpretive frame, with little opportunity for genuine convergence.

This failure to coordinate meaning gives rise to a counterproductive cycle of mutual blame. Students feel misunderstood by their academic advisors, advisors feel students do not appreciate their efforts, and parents feel excluded from their children's academic journey. This cycle is consistent with the concept of punctuation in communication theory, as discussed by Littlejohn et al. (2021), in which each party sees its own behavior as a response to the behavior of the other, thereby sustaining a vicious cycle that is difficult to break."

Drawing on Rogers's (1961) humanistic approach and its contemporary applications in educational settings (Hughey, 2011; Murphy & Joseph, 2019), the absence of empathetic communication points to the need for a fundamental reconstruction of the academic advisor's role. The role of the academic advisor needs to be redefined as a humanistic, transformative facilitator of student development. In this renewed role, academic advisors would not only monitor

students' academic progress but also build relational trust, enabling students to feel safe and comfortable sharing their difficulties at an early stage.

This reconstruction also requires a repositioning of parents within the academic support ecosystem. Wolf et al. (2009) emphasize that appropriate and well-calibrated parental involvement can improve students' academic success. Parents should no longer be treated merely as parties to be contacted when problems arise, but as strategic communication partners who are involved regularly in an early detection system for academic barriers. In this way, support from home can work in synergy with academic guidance provided on campus.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study confirms that academic leave and student dropout cannot be explained solely by individual academic factors. Rather, it is shaped by the complex multidimensional communication barriers that emerge within the relationships among students, academic advisors, and parents. These barriers take the form of sociological distance that separates students from academic culture, mismatched expectations that trigger reality shock, limited higher education literacy that constrains students' ability to navigate university life, and a failure to coordinate meaning that prevents academic support from functioning effectively.

From the perspective of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), this failure of meaning coordination leads each actor to construct a partial and often inaccurate interpretation of the same situation. When there is no space for dialogic negotiation of meaning, each party becomes trapped within its own assumptions. This condition creates a cycle of mutual blame, which in turn encourages students to withdraw from academic interaction.

Based on these findings, vocational higher education institutions need to create dialogic communication spaces that can bridge differences in interpretation among the actors involved. These spaces should be designed to reconstruct the meaning of college for Generation Z students so that it aligns more closely with the actual demands of academic life - not by forcing students to adapt unilaterally, but through a process of mutual and respectful negotiation of meaning.

As a practical step, the academic advisor's role should be redefined as that of a humanistic and transformative facilitator of student development. Academic advisors should be equipped with empathetic communication skills that enable them to build genuine, relational connections with students, rather than maintain purely administrative relationships. In addition, parents should be positioned as strategic communication partners within an early detection system for academic barriers. Their regular involvement - not only during moments of crisis - would strengthen the support network that sustains students throughout their studies.

This study recommends developing a multidimensional collaborative communication model that integrates all three actors within the academic support ecosystem. The model includes three main components: (1) a preventive communication system that schedules regular meetings among students, academic advisors, and parents before problems emerge; (2) empathetic

communication training for academic advisors so they can effectively carry out their role as humanistic facilitators; and (3) an information platform that provides parents with real-time access to their children's academic progress. Such a model may serve not only as a strategy to mitigate dropout risk, but also as a means to strengthen academic support systems in higher education, particularly within vocational institutions facing the distinctive challenges of Generation Z students.

#### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This study is limited by its qualitative case study design conducted within a single vocational higher education institution, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Although the research provides an in-depth understanding of multidimensional communication barriers among students, academic advisors, and parents, the perspectives captured may reflect the unique institutional culture and communication practices of the D3 English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Madiun. Future research should validate the proposed multidimensional collaborative communication model through quantitative or mixed-methods approaches involving multiple universities across different regions and institutional types. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine how communication patterns evolve throughout students' academic journeys and to assess the long-term effectiveness of preventive communication interventions in reducing academic leave and dropout rates. Furthermore, future investigations could integrate additional variables, such as students' psychological resilience, digital communication literacy, institutional support systems, socioeconomic background, and the use of artificial intelligence-assisted academic advising platforms, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of student persistence in the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education. Such studies would strengthen the theoretical development of communication-based student retention models while providing evidence-based strategies for improving academic support systems in vocational and non-vocational higher education institutions.

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