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THE DYNAMICS OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE INFLUENCE ON STUDENT LEARNING MOTIVATION AT MA MA'ARIF AL ASY'ARI

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of students' emotional attraction at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari which is often considered an obstacle to concentration, but psychologically has a strong influence on learning behavior. The main issue raised is the existence of rigid school policies on students' social relations, even though peer support is a key motivational factor. The purpose of this study is to map how the different interaction loci – internal and external to the school – affect the dynamics of student learning enthusiasm. Using a qualitative approach to phenomenological design, data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with teachers and students on April 22–23, 2026. The results show a pattern of impact dualism: the Internal-Class relationship functions as a positive catalyst through a mechanism of physical proximity (propinquity) that creates an intellectual "competition stage", where students perform self-equality in order to maintain an impression in front of the figure they admire. In contrast, the External-School relationship is destructive because it triggers "psychological energy leakage" and disorientation of priorities, leading to an increase in absenteeism because school is perceived as an inhibitor of outside interaction. The research discussion emphasized that the effectiveness of interpersonal motivation is highly dependent on the integration of these figures into the school ecosystem. In conclusion, an integrated relationship with the madrasah environment is able to turn emotional energy into academic encouragement, so the school needs to design an adaptive mentoring pattern by embracing the social dynamics of students as a positive force to achieve educational goals.

Keywords: Interpersonal Relationships; Learning Motivation; Interaction Locus; Spatial Proximity; Academic Commitment.

INTRODUCTION

High school or Madrasah Aliyah is often the most colorful and challenging chapter in a teenager's life. In this phase, school is not just a place to pursue values, but the main stage for the search for identity and the relationship between human beings. At MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari, the dynamics of students' interpersonal relationships—especially emotional attraction to the opposite sex—are still often underestimated as a disruptor of study concentration. In fact, if we dig deeper, this emotional vibration has a very strong influence, even able to change the way students behave in the classroom. The urgency of this research departs from anxiety about school policies that tend to be rigid in looking at students' social relationships. In fact, psychologically, support from peers is the main "fuel" for students' enthusiasm to stay at home at school (Cabrera, 2022). Learning motivation does not grow in a vacuum; It often arises out of a desire to gain recognition from people who are considered important to students. Problems become serious when the emotional center of the student is outside of school, which often leads to a loss of interest in learning and the desire to skip school.

Theoretically, we can see this phenomenon through glasses Stuttgart or the proximity of space. In short, whoever is physically closest to us is the one who has the greatest influence (Deng, 2024). In class, students are actually doing "self-presentations" (Self-presentation); They want to look smart and attractive in front of a figure they admire (Forster-Heinzer et al., 2023). If their crush is in the same class, this can be a trigger for positive academic competition (Haoxing & System, n.d.) However, the situation is reversed 180 degrees if the relationship is external. Referring to Social Control Theory, students' attachment to school will weaken if their hearts and minds have been "stolen" by life outside the school fence (Savera, 2025). School is finally only considered as a barrier to interaction. Therefore, this study aims to map how different interaction locations (inside vs outside the school) affect the rise and fall of students' enthusiasm for learning.

Through this analysis, it is hoped that MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari can formulate a more humane and adaptive mentoring pattern. The hypothesis put forward is quite simple but profound: interpersonal relationships established in the classroom will spur motivation due to the need to appear impressive, while relationships outside of school tend to pull students away from their academic commitments (Wentzel, 2023). By understanding this "emotional map", madrassas can embrace students' social dynamics as a positive force, not just an obstacle.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach and Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological design. This choice was made because the researcher wanted to dive deeper into the meaning behind the students' actions, rather than just looking at numbers. The main focus is to reveal the subjective experiences of students and teachers in dealing with the dialectic of emotional relationships, both in the classroom and those that come from outside the school.

Scope and Object of Research

The scope of this research is focused on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships (emotional attraction) and how it impacts academic commitment. The object of the research was the students of MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari who were clearly identified as having an emotional attachment, both with schoolmates and with outsiders.

Place and time of the research

This research was carried out at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari which is located at the location of the related research. Field data collection was carried out intensively for 2 (two days), namely from April 22 to 23, 2026. The implementation time is set at 07.00 – 11.00 WIB, adjusting to the active operating hours of the madrasah so that researchers can observe the interpersonal dynamics of students naturally.

Given the limited duration of the field, the researcher implemented a dense and measurable schedule as follows:

Table 1. Factual Schedule of Research Implementation

Day/Date	Time (WIB)	Activity Agenda
Wednesday, 22 April 2026	07.00 - 08.00	Final licensing and initial observation of the morning atmosphere at the madrasah.
	08.00 - 09.30	In-depth interview with the teacher (Informant 1).
	09.30 - 11.00	Participant observation on student interaction during break hours.
Thursday, 23 April 2026	07.00 - 09.00	Group interviews with student representatives (Informant 2).
	09.00 - 10.30	Documentation of school facilities and collection of motivational archive data.
	10.30 - 11.00	Farewell/closure of field activities and initial data verification.

Research Materials and Tools

1. Interview Guidelines (Interview Guide): In the form of a list of questions or core points that you want to ask students and teachers. The goal is so that the conversation does not wander and remains focused on the theme of interpersonal relationships.
2. Observation Sheet: A guide that contains a list of things to observe. For example: how the teacher greets students, or how the students' gestures when talking to their friends.
3. Field Notes: A notebook or paper to record unique events that are discovered suddenly while you are on site.
4. Documentation Tools: A smartphone or camera to record sound (audio) and take photos as proof that the execution of the program is actually carried out

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through three complementary ways:

1. Participatory Observation: Researchers are present in the middle of learning activities to observe students' non-verbal behavior, such as the extent of their attention to the lesson and how they interact with the person they like.
2. In-Depth Interviews: The researcher conducts a relaxed but structured two-way dialogue with students and teachers to explore their perspectives on the spirit of learning and the obstacles they face.
3. Documentation: The researcher reviewed supporting data such as attendance lists and achievement records to see the link between students' social lives and their academic performance.

Operational Definition

In order not to misinterpret it, the main points in this study are defined as follows:

1. Internal Interpersonal Relationships: A condition in which students have an emotional attraction to friends who are in one classroom or one madrasah environment.
2. External Interpersonal Relationships: The emotional connections that students establish with individuals who are outside the MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari ecosystem.
3. Learning Motivation: A student's psychological passion to demonstrate intellectual ability, activeness in class, as well as adherence to school responsibilities.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out in a flowing manner using the Miles and Huberman Interactive Analysis model, which consisted of three stages:

1. Data Reduction: Sorting and selecting the most important data from the stack of interview results and field notes.
2. Data Presentation: Organize the data that has been sorted into the form of descriptive narratives and tables so that the patterns of relationships found become clearer.
3. Conclusion: The final stage in which the researcher interprets all the data to answer the core problem regarding the influence of interpersonal relationships on students' learning motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on intensive observation and in-depth interviews conducted on April 22–23, 2026 at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari, it was found that students' interpersonal relationships especially emotional attractions—have a dual role that is highly dependent on the locus of interaction. The data of this study show a dialectical pattern that distinguishes constructive and destructive impacts on students' academic commitment.

Table 2. Patterns of Impact of Interpersonal Relationships by Locus

No	Categories Interactions	Behavioral Characteristics	Impact on Academics
1.	Internal Classes	There are efforts to equalize intellectuals and positive competition in front of admired figures	Constructive (Increases learning motivation)
2.	External-School	There is a disorientation of priorities and considers schools as an obstacle to external interaction.	Destructive (Increases absenteeism/absenteeism)

The table above illustrates that the presence of a preferred figure in a classroom creates a "competition stage". Students tend to show their best intellectual performance in order to get a positive impression or intellectual recognition from these significant figures. On the other hand, relationships oriented outside the madrasah are actually an obstacle because they trigger the phenomenon of increased attendance and low student involvement due to thoughts that are fixated on relationships outside the physical reach of the school.

Locus Dialectics: The Influence of Space on Academic Motivation

The analysis of these findings describes the existence of impact dualism that is highly determined by the scope of the interaction. The presence of significant figures in the classroom has been shown to create a function of social control organically. This is in line with the concept of propinquity which states that physical proximity consistently increases the intensity of influence between individuals. These findings also reinforce the theory that interpersonal interactions in schools can be a strong predictor of student engagement in the learning process. However, this study provides an important specification that not all romantic relationships are inhibiting; The key lies in the integration of these figures into the school ecosystem.

Self-Equality and the Stage of Intellectual Competition

In the internal sphere, there is a phenomenon of "self-equalization" where students improve their academic standards in order to maintain an impression in front of their likes. Theoretically, this is related to Erving Goffman's concept of Self-Presentation, in which schools are managed as a "front stage" to demonstrate the qualities of the self that are considered ideal. Peer support has proven to be often more effective than motivation from teacher instruction alone in spurring the spirit of learning (Schieghart, 2022).

Priority disorientation and psychological energy leakage

The negative impact of external relationships is analyzed as a form of "psychological energy leakage". When students' emotional attention is fixed on parties outside of school, their bond with the educational institution weakens. This condition is in accordance with Social Control Theory which emphasizes that the individual's attachment to school is the main bulwark against deviant behavior (Isrofi & Ghozali Rusyid Affandi, 2024). Schools were then perceived as "prisons" that limited the time for outside social interactions, which logically triggered an increase in absenteeism. This analysis also corrects the assumption that the decline in achievement is only caused by cognitive factors; Often this is the result of the fragmentation of relationships that draw students' attention out of the school ecosystem (Razeto, 2025).

Discussion

The Concept of Interpersonal Relationships in Madrasah

Interpersonal relationships are the dynamics of communication and social interaction that occur between two or more interdependent individuals. In the context of Madrasah Aliyah Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari, this relationship includes the relationship between teachers and students as well as between

fellow students who are bound by family values and religiosity. The quality of this relationship is determined by openness, empathy, and mutual support in the school environment. Harmonious interpersonal relationships in madrassas will create a comfortable psychological climate, so that students feel accepted and recognized in the learning community.(Royanti et al., 2023)

The Essence of Student Learning Motivation

According to Sardiman, motivation can be said to be a series of efforts to provide certain conditions, so that a person wants and wants to do something, and if he does not like it, he will try to eliminate the feeling of dislike.(Hidayati, 2017) Learning motivation is the driving force that exists in students to carry out learning activities diligently in order to achieve the desired academic goals. This motivation does not appear just like that, but is influenced by internal factors such as ideals, as well as external factors such as the school environment and teachers' teaching methods. At the adolescent level, motivation often fluctuates depending on how they respond to the pressure of task and support from those around them. Motivated students will show consistent enthusiasm, do not give up easily when facing difficulties, and have a high interest in the subject matter delivered in class.(Habsy et al., 2023)

The Effect of Social Interaction on the Spirit of Learning

Theoretically, the dynamics of interpersonal relationships have a direct impact on the stability of students' learning motivation. When a student has a positive relationship with his teacher, he or she tends to be more courageous to actively participate and ask questions when experiencing difficulties. Likewise with peer relationships; A supportive group of friends will be Support system which keeps the students' enthusiasm for learning high. Conversely, obstacles in interpersonal relationships, such as conflict or neglect, can shift students' focus of attention from lessons to the social problems they face, ultimately lowering their academic productivity in the madrasah.(Amelia & Ain, 2023)

The Relevance of Interpersonal Relationships in Educational Psychology

In the perspective of educational psychology, the fulfillment of social needs or a sense of attachment (Relevance) is one of the main keys to turning external motivation into a strong inner motivation. Through quality interaction at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari, the process of knowledge transfer is no longer felt as a burden, but as a fun process of self-development. Therefore, building healthy interpersonal relationships is not just an effort to maintain politeness, but an educational strategy to ensure that each student has enough psychological energy to complete their learning responsibilities to the maximum.(Saadah et al., 2024)

Locus Dynamics: The Influence of Space on Academic Motivation

The findings of this study show that there are impact dynamics that are highly determined by the scope of student interaction at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari. The presence of significant figures in the classroom is shown to create an organically social control function, which is in line with the concept Stuttgart that physical proximity consistently increases the intensity of influence between individuals (Ixfina, 2024). This dynamic confirms that interpersonal relationships are the main predictors of student involvement in the learning process (Wang & Yuan, 2024). The key lies in the integration of these figures into the school ecosystem so that there is no fragmentation of attention that can damage students' academic focus.

Self-Equality and the Intellectual Competition Stage

In the internal sphere, there is a dynamic of "self-equalization" where students improve their academic standards in order to maintain an impression in front of an admired figure. Theoretically, this is related to the concept of Self-Presentation, where the school is managed as a "front stage" (Front stage) to show the qualities of self that are considered ideal (Cotruta, 2024). Field data prove that peer support is often more effective than teacher instruction motivation alone in spurring learning enthusiasm (Fitri & Astuti, 2024). A sense of belonging to the school (School-owned) become a strong anchor in maintaining emotional stability and consistency of students' intellectual performance. (Adinata & Hanami, 2024)

Priority Disorientation and Psychological Energy Leakage

In contrast, the dynamics of interpersonal relationships centered outside of school trigger the phenomenon of "psychological energy leakage". When students' emotional attention is fixed on parties outside the institution, their bond with the school is weakened, in accordance with Social Control Theory which emphasizes that the individual's attachment to school is the main bulwark against deviant behavior(Cabrera, 2022). This condition causes schools to be perceived as "prisons" that limit the time of outside social interactions, which logically triggers an increase in the number of absences.

This analysis also corrects the assumption that the decline in achievement is only caused by cognitive factors, but is the impact of emotional magnetic pull from outside the madrasah ecosystem. This requires an appropriate methodological approach in distinguishing the variables that affect the behavior of the students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research and discussion on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships at MA Ma'arif Al Asy'Ari, it can be concluded that students' interpersonal relationships have a dualistic influence that is highly dependent on the locus or scope of interaction. Internal-class relations serve as a positive catalyst through the mechanism of physical proximity (propinquity) that creates the intellectual "stage of competition". In this condition, students tend to make efforts to equalize themselves by improving their learning standards in order to maintain an impression and gain social validation from the figure they admire in the classroom. This proves that an integrated relationship with the school ecosystem is able to turn emotional energy into competitive and constructive academic encouragement. In contrast, external-school-oriented interpersonal relationships tend to be destructive because they trigger the phenomenon of "psychological energy leakage" and disorientation of priorities. When students' emotional attention is fixed on parties outside the school, their bond with the educational institution weakens so that the school is perceived as a "prison" that limits outside social interaction. The impact is evident in the decrease in attention in the classroom as well as a significant increase in absenteeism. Therefore, the decline in student achievement is not only caused by cognitive factors, but also the impact of the fragmentation of social relationships that attract students' attention out of the madrasah ecosystem. Building harmonious and healthy interpersonal relationships in the school environment is a crucial educational strategy to ensure that students' psychological energy remains directed to maximum learning responsibilities.

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