Building Interpersonal Communication Skills in the Digital Age for Vocational Students in South Jakarta

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication skills are a person's ability to establish personal relationships with others directly well. Amid the rampant development of communication and information technology today, interpersonal communication skills on the one hand are needed but on the other hand face challenges. In the digital age, people tend to prefer to communicate with others using social media rather than communicating face-to-face in person. People prefer using social media rather than socializing with others. As a result, interpersonal communication skills become undeveloped and inhibited. Among students, interpersonal communication skills are needed for self-development and soft skills, especially in building positive relationships with friends, teachers, family, and the social environment where they are. This Community Partnership Program offers solutions to build interpersonal communication skills among students of Al Falah Mampang Prapatan Vocational High School (SMK), South Jakarta. The results of this program show that students become more familiar with the concept of interpersonal communication skills, consider it important to have interpersonal communication skills, and are motivated to improve their interpersonal communication skills.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the digital era is marked by the emergence of various forms of digital-based media. These digital media are then referred to as new media which is a convergence of various forms of conventional media. New media is media that provides convergence, digital networks, global reach, interactivity, communication *many-to-many*, and new forms of media where one can be both a producer and a consumer (Flew, 2005). One form of new media is social media with various platforms that are growing and popular today such as Youtube facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and so on.

The emergence of social media as a new media in the digital era certainly has various impacts on individuals and society. Social media has a positive impact such as getting new information, entertainment, existence, and self-actualization, and acts as a disseminator of information in the community (Fitriani, 2017; Rohmah, 2020). On the other hand, social media also causes negative impacts such as excess information, hoaxes or false information, dependence, and addiction, including various forms of *cyberbullying* (Aprilia et al., 2020; Gumgum et al., 2017; Sukmawati & Kumala, 2020). One of the other implications of social media

use is a decrease in direct or face-to-face interaction between individuals. People prefer communication through social media rather than meeting and meeting face to face. Though direct communication or interpersonal communication skills are very important for a person's success in life.

Interpersonal communication skills are a person's ability to establish relationships with others well. Interpersonal communication skills include everything from communication and listening skills, conveying messages, attitudes and behaviors, and the ability to project a positive attitude and find solutions to problems (Syriac, 2019). Interpersonal communication skills can be seen from the effectiveness of communication whether the message conveyed by one person can be received by others appropriately. In the context of students, students' interpersonal communication skills are related to students' ability to establish effective relationships with fellow students, teachers, and the school environment. Interpersonal communication skills are the key that also encourages one's self-presentation to get attention as a stage to start more meaningful communication. Ineffective interpersonal communication, the meaning is that something communicated is successfully received by the recipient of the message. The quality effectiveness of interpersonal communication identifies the communicated behavior as containing empathy, supportive attitude, self-confidence, and so on (Devito, 2011).

Interpersonal communication skills are needed in various domains and professions. In the context of an organization or company, interpersonal communication skills possessed by employees through training can improve *teamwork* which can further increase work productivity (Aziz et al., 2019). Interpersonal communication skills are also needed in the teaching process carried out by teachers to their students because they can help create feedback, messages/motivation, empathy, openness, and positive attitudes in the learning process (Sulisni, 2020). Likewise, in the world of higher education, interpersonal communication skills have an important position in improving the quality of social relations between new students (Palupi, 2019). Interpersonal communication skills are also very important for community groups such as Posyandu cadres because they will help the success of the programs implemented. After all, cadres' communication with the community is dialogical, familiar, and pleasant (Sekarningrum > Yunita, 2023). In the context of the family, the interpersonal communication skills of married couples also play an important role in family harmony so that a harmonious and happy family is realized (Aini et al., 2022)

This community partnership program is implemented based on problems that occur at SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan, namely students who are not good at interpersonal communication, including persuasive communication are also less qualified. This happened because according to Ibu Dedeh Vice Principal of SMK Al Falah, the lack of interaction between students was because they used their free time more to play on social media such as TikTok and Instagram or play online games rather than chatting directly with their friends. On the other hand, human resources at SMK Al Falah themselves cannot provide training or development of interpersonal communication skills to students. In addition, such programs have not become a priority activity for the Al Falah Foundation which houses SMK Al Falah.

Based on the above problems, this program offers solutions in various forms of activities, namely first, providing basic understanding through lecture methods and discussions about the understanding, benefits, and role of interpersonal communication skills Second, providing an understanding of the importance of interpersonal communication skills to current and future students and teachers. Third, assist students and teachers to practice interpersonal communication skills directly during the program.

METHOD

This Community Partnership Program is carried out by the Community Service Team from the Communication Science Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Prof. Dr. HAMKA, chaired by Dini Wahdiyati, S.Sos., M.I.Kom, with team members namely Dr. Hendri Prasetya, M.Si., Dr. Said Romadlan, M.Si, and Ratih Novita Sari, M.Pd.

In the implementation of this community partnership program, three methods are integrative, namely (1) questionnaire, which is a method that aims to obtain data by submitting several questions to informants (Eriyanto, 2019). In this activity, the questionnaire was carried out with the pre-post method to measure differences in student understanding before and after the activity was carried out. (2) Presentation and question and answer, first regarding training materials, namely understanding, benefits, and role of interpersonal communication skills, Second, providing an understanding of the importance of interpersonal communication skills to current and future students and teachers. (3) Guided Discussion Group/*Focus Group Discussion*

(FGD), the FGD method is a method of data collection or research to understand the attitudes and behavior of audiences (Kriyantono, 2009). In this training, the FGD method is used to reveal student problems related to interpersonal communication skills and ways to overcome these problems.

DISCUSSION

The Community Partnership Program in the form of interpersonal communication skills training in the digital era will be held on July 21, 2023, at SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan, South Jakarta as an activity partner. The activity, which is a form of community service, was attended by 76 students as the target of the activity program and several teachers as companions.

Figure 1. Students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan, South Jakarta are attending interpersonal communication skills training held by the UHAMKA Communication Science Study Program Community Service Team, on July 21, 2023 (source: activity documentation).

The implementation of interpersonal communication skills training activities in the digital era for students of SMK AL Falah Mampang Prapatan was divided into four sessions. The first session was a pre-test and activity orientation, namely giving several questions in the form of questionnaires to participants to find out initial knowledge about the material and the purpose of the activity. This first session was guided by Dr. Said Romadlan, M.Si. as a member of the Community Service Team of UHAMKA Communication Science Study Program. The second session, delivering material 1 regarding the understanding, benefits, and role of interpersonal communication skills, was delivered by Dini Wahdiyati, S.Sos., M.Ikom, as the head of the community service team. Material 2 regarding understanding the importance of interpersonal communication skills to current and future students and teachers was delivered by Dr. Hendri Prasetya, M.Si. as a member of the community service team.

Furthermore, the third session was *a focus group discussion* (FGD), this session aimed to help reveal the problems faced by SMK Al Falah students in gaining interpersonal communication skills and efforts to overcome them. The third session was guided by Ratih Novita Sari, M.Pd. as a member of the community service team. The last session is a post-test in the form of giving several questions similar to the pre-test, in the form of questionnaires to participants to find out the final knowledge about the material and the purpose of the activity after attending the training.

In detail, the implementation of the Community Partnership Program in the form of interpersonal communication skills training in the digital era for students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Implementation of Interpersonal Communication Skills Training in the Digital Age for Students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan

Time	Activity Materials	Speaker/Speaker
08.00-08.30	Unveiling Welcome	Student Kepala Sekolah SMK Al Falah.
08.30-09.30	Sesi 1: Sharing dan Pre-test	Dr. Said Romadlan, M.Si.
09.30-10.30	Session 2: Material 1. Understanding, benefits, and role of interpersonal communication skills.	Dini Wahdiyati, M.I.Kom.
10.30-11.30	Session 3: Material 2. The importance of interpersonal communication skills for students.	Dr. Hendri Prasetya, M.Si.
11.30-13.00	Rest/Friday Prayer	
13.00-14.30	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Ratih Novitasari, M.Pd.
14.30-15.00	Post-test and Closing	PKM Implementation Team Wakil Kepala Sekolah SMK Al Falah.

The results of interpersonal communication skills training activities in the digital era for students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan can be carried out properly according to the desired target. Based on the results of the pre-test and post-test conducted, there are significant differences in the understanding of SMK Al Falah students regarding interpersonal communication skills and the implementation of activities. Regarding the understanding of the concept of interpersonal communication skills, it shows an increase in understanding, in the pre-test students who do not understand 98% and who understand only 2%. However, after training activities, those who understand become 95%, and those who do not understand become 5%. Likewise, regarding the urgency of learning interpersonal communication skills, at first students considered unimportant 35% and important 65%, but after the implementation of training activities there was a change where those who considered unimportant dropped to 3% and those who considered important rose 97%.

This training also contributes to learners' self-development and to creating content on social media. At first, students considered the contribution of this training to be more to create content on social media, which was 64% than for self-development which was only 36%. However, after attending the training, students experienced a change in the view that the most important thing from interpersonal communication skills training is for self-development, which is as much as 65% and to create social media content 35%. Meanwhile, in the expectations of interpersonal communication skills training, in general, student expectations are met, namely to be able to speak in public and to be able to communicate politely. Students' expectations of training do not differ too much between expectations before and after training. In more detail, the results of the pre-test and post-test on interpersonal communication skills training can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Results of Interpersonal Communication Skills Training in the Digital Age for Students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan

Statement	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Understanding the Concept of Interpersonal Communication	Don't understand: 98% Understand: 2%	Don't understand: 5% Understand: 95%
The Urgency of Learning Interpersonal Communication	Not essential: 35% Important: 65%	Not essential: 3% Important: 97%
Contribution of Training to the Self	For self-development: 36% To create social media content: 64%	For self-development: 65% To create social media content: 35%
Expectations for training	To be able to speak in public: 42% To communicate politely: 58%	To speak in public: 55% To communicate politely: 45%

The FGD results of this training show the factors that cause SMK Al Falah students to lack interpersonal communication skills. First, the friendship environment is related to the environment of friends at school who more often use their free time to play gadgets (HP), both for social media and online games rather than interacting or telling each other (chatting) directly. Second, the lack of encouragement and opportunities from

the school to build an atmosphere that can create interpersonal communication skills for students, such as competitions or training as currently implemented.

The efforts that must be made so that students have interpersonal communication skills, based on the results of the FGD, among others, are the need for self-awareness from students to reduce the use of gadgets in the school environment. Even if there are free hours, students should use them for study discussion, or other interactive activities that can build interpersonal communication skills, such as discussions, storytelling, interviews, and so on. Second, a clear policy is needed related to efforts to build students' interpersonal communication skills at the school. For example, the school regularly holds or participates in competitions that can build students' interpersonal communication skills. The school can also conduct trainings that can build students' interpersonal communication skills regularly, to create a conducive atmosphere or culture in the school environment.

As a discussion, the results of the community partnership program in the form of interpersonal communication skills training showed the results that interpersonal communication skills are important and needed for self-development, and communication skills in the public. These results are appropriate and certainly develop the important role of interpersonal communication skills in various domains and professions. It seems that interpersonal communication skills training can improve students' interpersonal communication skills (Suzanna et al., 2022). Interpersonal communication skills are also important for security units (Satpam) to be able to communicate well and effectively in carrying out their duties as a security unit in a neighborhood or housing complex (Sofia et al., 2020). For Posyandu cadres, interpersonal communication skills training is also very helpful for them not only to be able to communicate with the community better but also to increase closeness between cadres, more open communication, and support each other positively (Sari & Ariyanto, 2019). Interpersonal communication skills are also important for community children and millennials. For community children, interpersonal communication skills are useful for increasing cooperation and responsibility for the roles assigned to them (Lais, 2023). As for millennials, interpersonal communication skills training is important to communicate effectively (Iswadi, 2022).

The studies above show the important role of interpersonal communication skills in various professions and fields of study. This is the result of a study from the interpersonal communication skills training program in the digital era for students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan, South Jakarta.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication skills training in the digital era is needed for students, especially students of SMK Al Falah Mampang Prapatan, South Jakarta. These interpersonal communication skills are important and needed for self-development, communication skills in public, and for creating content on social media. For this reason, efforts are needed to build students' interpersonal communication skills, both for themselves and the school. Students should be able to manage their leisure time by utilizing it with activities that support the development of interpersonal communication skills, such as discussing and telling stories instead of playing social media or online games. Meanwhile, the school must be able to create a conducive atmosphere that supports students' interpersonal communication skills, such as holding and participating in competitions that support the development of interpersonal communication skills, including regularly holding trainings on developing students' interpersonal communication skills.

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