

Interpersonal Skills to Build Inclusive Collaboration at Telesandi Communication Vocational School Bekasi

Keterampilan Interpersonal untuk Membangun Kolaborasi Inklusif di Sekolah Vokasi Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of information technology necessitates that vocational school students acquire not only technical competencies but also interpersonal skills that facilitate effective collaboration and workplace communication. This community service activity was designed to enhance students' understanding of key interpersonal skills, including inclusivity, empathy, active listening, ethical communication, teamwork, and digital collaboration. The activity was implemented at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi through interactive presentations, group discussions, simulations, and case-based learning. The content addressed psychological safety, empathy in team settings, ethical digital communication, and conflict management in information technology projects. The outcomes indicated that students were actively engaged throughout the session and demonstrated heightened awareness of effective communication and collaborative conduct. Participants were able to identify examples of inclusive practices, apply empathy mapping techniques, and appreciate the importance of netiquette in digital communication. The training further encouraged students to critically reflect on their own behavior in team and online contexts. This activity contributes to the development of students' soft skills in preparation for entry into the professional world, particularly in technology-driven industries where strong interpersonal communication and teamwork are essential.

Keywords: interpersonal skill, inclusivity, empathy, teamwork, vocational education

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi informasi yang pesat mengharuskan siswa sekolah kejuruan memperoleh tidak hanya kompetensi teknis tetapi juga keterampilan interpersonal yang memfasilitasi kolaborasi dan komunikasi di tempat kerja yang efektif. Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini dirancang untuk meningkatkan pemahaman siswa tentang keterampilan interpersonal utama, termasuk inklusivitas, empati, mendengarkan secara aktif, komunikasi etis, kerja tim, dan kolaborasi digital. Kegiatan tersebut dilaksanakan di SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi melalui presentasi interaktif, diskusi kelompok, simulasi, dan pembelajaran berbasis kasus. Konten tersebut membahas keamanan psikologis, empati dalam pengaturan tim, komunikasi digital etis, dan manajemen konflik dalam proyek teknologi informasi. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa siswa terlibat secara aktif selama sesi dan menunjukkan kesadaran yang tinggi akan komunikasi yang efektif dan perilaku kolaboratif. Peserta mampu mengidentifikasi contoh praktik inklusif, menerapkan teknik pemetaan empati, dan menghargai pentingnya netiket dalam komunikasi digital. Pelatihan ini lebih lanjut mendorong siswa untuk secara kritis merefleksikan perilaku mereka sendiri dalam konteks tim dan online. Kegiatan ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan soft skill siswa dalam persiapan masuk ke dunia profesional, khususnya di industri berbasis teknologi di mana komunikasi interpersonal dan kerja tim yang kuat sangat penting.

Kata kunci: keterampilan interpersonal, inklusivitas, empati, kerja tim, sekolah kejuruan

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information technology and digital transformation has fundamentally altered the competency requirements of the workforce. Graduates of Vocational High Schools (SMK), particularly those in the field of information and communication technology, are increasingly expected to possess not only technical skills (*hard skills*), but also interpersonal skills (*soft skills*) that support effective collaboration, communication, and professional ethics in the workplace.

Goleman (2018) argues that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in individual success within the work environment, as it encompasses the ability to understand both oneself and others. This view

is further supported by Robbins and Judge (2022), who note that contemporary organizations require individuals capable of working collaboratively in teams, communicating effectively, and adapting to change.

In the context of vocational education, interpersonal skills are particularly significant, as students will eventually enter work environments that demand cross-functional collaboration and the ability to manage conflicts professionally. Johnson and Johnson (2019) emphasized that group success is largely determined by the quality of communication and interaction among team members.

The training materials delivered at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi reinforced the notion that career success is not solely determined by technical proficiency, but also by interpersonal competencies such as communication, empathy, and teamwork. This aligns with the perspective of Covey (2020), who asserts that effective communication and the capacity to understand others are fundamental habits underpinning individual and organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the growth of digital work culture has heightened the significance of online communication ethics. Effendy (2017) asserted that effective communication must account for ethical considerations, contextual factors, and the potential impact of messages on their recipients. In the domain of information technology, poor digital communication practices can precipitate conflicts and misunderstandings within project teams.

Edmondson (2019) introduced the concept of *psychological safety*, which refers to a shared belief that team members are safe to voice ideas, raise questions, or acknowledge mistakes without fear of ridicule or retribution. This concept is directly applicable to the inclusivity module incorporated into the training delivered at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi.

Based on these considerations, this community service activity was designed to enhance students' understanding of interpersonal skills, with a particular focus on fostering inclusive, empathetic, and ethically grounded collaboration in technology-related contexts.

METHODS

This community service activity was conducted at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi, involving 32 students from the information and communication technology program across two class groups (Grade X and Grade XI). The implementation employed an educational-participatory approach, encompassing material delivery, simulations, interactive discussions, and case-based learning.

The qualitative parameters applied during the direct observation and reflection sessions included: (1) the frequency and quality of student verbal contributions during discussions, (2) the accuracy and depth of empathy maps produced in group activities, (3) students' ability to identify inclusive and exclusive communication behaviors in case scenarios, and (4) the level of self-reflection demonstrated during the closing session, assessed through written reflective statements collected from each participant.

The activity was organized into the following stages:

Preparation of Activities

- a) Preparation of interpersonal skills training materials.
- b) Coordination with the school regarding the schedule and participants of the activity.
- c) Preparation of presentation media and learning simulations.

Implementation of Training

Materials were delivered interactively, drawing on real-world examples from school settings and the information technology industry, including teamwork in software development projects, communication within digital groups, and conflict resolution in technology-based projects.

Simulation and Discussion

Participants engaged in an *empathy map simulation* to develop empathy toward teammates experiencing work pressure or technical difficulties. Group discussions were also facilitated to explore ethical and effective communication practices in digital media contexts.

Evaluation of Activities

Evaluation was conducted through direct observation of student participation, question-and-answer sessions, and participant reflection on the training content. The findings further underscore the importance of moving beyond one-time training interventions toward systematic integration of interpersonal skill components into day-to-day laboratory and project-based activities. For instance, faculty may embed empathy mapping as a compulsory step in each software development laboratory module, or incorporate communication ethics checkpoints into existing group project assessments. This approach would ensure ongoing reinforcement of inclusive communication practices within the existing curriculum rather than relying solely on discrete training events. The key findings from the evaluation are as follows:

1. Students demonstrated a high level of engagement and genuine enthusiasm throughout the session. Many participants actively raised questions, shared personal experiences related to teamwork, and contributed meaningfully to group discussions.
2. Students expressed a strong interest in interpersonal skills and a clear desire to explore the topic further. Several participants noted that the material broadened their awareness of communication and collaboration aspects that had not been formally addressed in their existing curriculum.
3. During the reflection session, students were able to identify concrete examples of inclusive communication practices, apply empathy mapping to real team scenarios, and articulate the importance of netiquette in their digital interactions.
4. Overall, the evaluation results indicate significant potential for establishing interpersonal skills training as a recurring program within vocational school settings, given students' recognition of its direct relevance to their future professional lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The training session proceeded in an interactive manner and elicited positive responses from participants. Students demonstrated enthusiasm, particularly during discussions of communication case studies set within technology project contexts.

During the effective communication session, students gained insight into the significance of both verbal and nonverbal communication in the execution of technology projects. DeVito (2021) noted that interpersonal communication extends beyond mere message transmission—it involves the co-construction of shared meaning between individuals. This was evident as students began to appreciate the value of *active listening* in group work.

The active listening module drew upon the SOLER framework (*listening material* uses the SOLER approach (*Squarely face the person, Open posture, Lean towards, Eye contact, and Relax*). This framework helped students distinguish between active listening and merely hearing sounds. Hargie (2021) affirmed that the capacity for active listening enhances the quality of interpersonal relationships and mitigates communication-related conflicts.

In the empathy session, students participated in *an empathy map* exercises to better understand the emotional states of team members facing task overload and deadline pressure. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2016) highlighted that the capacity to recognize and understand others' emotions constitutes a vital dimension of emotional intelligence that underpins effective teamwork.

The inclusivity module also yielded meaningful outcomes, deepening students' appreciation for diversity within teams. Edmondson (2019) observed that psychologically safe environments foster individual creativity and embolden team members to contribute their ideas freely.

Students additionally acquired an understanding of digital communication ethics (*netiquette*), covering principles such as the use of formal language, refraining from spam, and observing appropriate communication boundaries. Effendy (2017) emphasized that communication ethics is an indispensable component of healthy social interaction, particularly in contexts mediated by digital platforms.

Table 1. Participant Motivation Level

No	Category	Number (students)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	18	10,00
2.	Medium	42	23,33
3.	Height	120	66,66
Quantity		180	100,00

Discussion



Figure 1. Presentation of Community Service Activity
Delivery of interpersonal skills training materials to students of SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi



Figure 2. Interactive Discussion and Simulation Session
Interactive discussion sessions and empathy map simulation activities to foster understanding of communication and teamwork.



Figure 3. Interpersonal Skill Material

CONCLUSION

The interpersonal skills training conducted at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi successfully enhanced students' understanding of effective communication, empathy, teamwork, inclusivity, and digital communication ethics within the context of information technology.

Through interactive instructional methods and simulation-based activities, students were able to recognize the importance of interpersonal skills as competencies that underpin career success in the digital era. This initiative has made a meaningful contribution toward equipping vocational school students to meet the demands of a workforce that values both technical proficiency and strong interpersonal communication.

Future iterations of this program may be enriched by incorporating industry-based collaborative project activities and implementing a more structured assessment of interpersonal competencies. Specifically, future program design should include: (1) a pre- and post-training assessment instrument to measure changes in students' interpersonal competency levels, using validated rubrics such as peer evaluation forms and facilitator observation checklists; (2) integration of empathy mapping and communication ethics modules into recurring laboratory sessions, facilitated by classroom teachers rather than external trainers, to ensure sustained exposure; and (3) an industry-partnered longitudinal follow-up study that tracks the career readiness and workplace communication outcomes of graduates over a period of one to two years after program completion. Such a study, conducted in collaboration with partner companies in the technology sector, would provide empirical evidence of the program's long-term impact and inform continuous curriculum improvement at SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi and similar vocational institutions.

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- a) Students of SMK Komunikasi Telesandi Bekasi
- b) Lecturers and training facilitators
- c) Supervising teacher

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