

Youth Communication Savvy: Improving Their Ability to Become a Reliable Communicator in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Teenagers; Communication Skills;
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Development

In the era of rapid digital transformation, teenagers face unique challenges in developing effective communication skills. Although they are digital natives, many adolescents lack the competence and awareness needed to communicate ethically and responsibly in both online and offline contexts. This community service activity aimed to strengthen the communication abilities of teenagers at Al-Ikhlas Jatipadang Mosque, South Jakarta. The program involved a series of steps, including situation analysis, planning, and implementation through counseling and practical exercises. Participants were introduced to the fundamentals of communication, the importance of polite behavior, and the principles of intelligent speech. They were also taught to recognize and correct common misconceptions—such as believing that communication is merely speaking or that it only occurs during intentional interaction. Practical sessions, including simulations of responding to online comments, helped reinforce the lessons. The results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding and communication skills, as indicated by pre- and post-test scores and participant feedback. The activity not only equipped teenagers with essential skills for navigating the digital world but also emphasized the importance of ethical communication, empathy, and social responsibility. The program highlights how community-based education can foster youth as positive communicators in society.

1. Introduction

Communication touches all aspects of human life. Being accustomed to communicating does not necessarily make it easy to do, especially for teenagers in the digital era that has brought fundamental changes to the communication landscape. Growing up in a fast-paced, interactive, and information-rich digital media ecosystem, makes them have unique characteristics and are fully dependent on digital devices to communicate so that various challenges and digital gaps in how to communicate are inevitable.

Ease of access and interactivity in the digital era presents its own challenges in the practice of adolescent communication. Fadly, D. (2024) stated that technological changes that are able to offer unprecedented opportunities give rise to challenges for adolescents include mental health and the

dynamics of social interactions; One of the major challenges facing adolescents in the digital age is the influence of social media on their identity and self-esteem.

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in a person's life. At this stage, individuals experience significant physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes. It is also during this time that adolescents begin to search for their identity and explore various roles and ideologies, they try to understand who they really are and how they fit into society (Erik Erikson, 1989). Adolescents often use social media to compare themselves to others, which can lead to feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction with their own appearance or achievements (Aprilia et al., 2020).

The pressure to get "likes" and positive comments can lead to social anxiety and an obsession with a perfect self-image. In addition, exposure to *cyberbullying*, the spread of inaccurate information (*hoaxes*), *hate speech*, can damage adolescents' self-esteem and emotional well-being. While social media can facilitate connections with friends and family, excessive use can lead to social isolation.

In addition to the challenges, the digital divide in how teenagers communicate also has an impact, especially on parents or previous generations who accompany and accompany them (Starting from Generation Baby Boomers, X, to Y). Differences in understanding and use of communication technology such as teenagers as Digital Natives and Parents as Digital Immigrants; differences in norms and ethics of online communication such as teenagers adopting online communication norms that are often more flexible and open, while parents have a more conservative understanding of online privacy and communication ethics; create a significant gap for teenagers in how to communicate.

The transition and adaptation from face-to-face communication to technology-mediated communication often eliminates important nonverbal nuances, potentially causing misunderstandings and conflicts, and even getting the current generation of teenagers used to not talking to each other even when they are close. Each of them is busy with the devices they have.

According to Mustika, S., Corliana, T., Tiara, A., & Arifin, S. (2025), The more familiar people are with gadgets, the more indifferent they are to the people around them. Apparently, human expertise in using technology as a means of communication does not make humans more adept at communicating, but instead makes them more antisocial. Teenagers prefer to scroll through *gadget* screens on their social media for hours rather than chat with parents or siblings and friends who are nearby. Many teenagers spend excessive time in front of the screen, sacrificing face-to-face interactions that are important for the development of social skills.

Spending more time on social media, makes them more susceptible to symptoms of depression and feels lonelier. Digital technology, especially the use of mobile devices, can disrupt the concentration and focus of teenagers. Easy access to social media, *online games*, and other applications often leads to excessive *multitasking*. This can reduce productivity and academic performance. Teenagers who are often distracted by notifications and messages tend to have difficulty completing schoolwork and studying effectively (Kiniret & Susilowati, 2021; Novrialdy, 2019).

On the other hand, the positive potential of the digital era in facilitating communication and collaboration is also very large. Teenagers who are good at digital communication have wider opportunities to build positive social networks, express themselves creatively, participate in constructive public discussions, and utilize various sources of information and learning. The ability to become a reliable communicator in the digital era is not only about being proficient in using platforms, but also about having ethical awareness, critical thinking skills in receiving and disseminating information, and strong interpersonal skills in interacting online.

In the digital era, teenagers are not only active consumers of digital content, but also producers and disseminators of information through various social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online forums. The ability to communicate effectively in the digital realm is crucial for their personal, social, academic, and professional development in the future. Given this context, it is necessary to arrange strategic activities such as community service activities with a focus on improving the communication skills of teenagers in the digital era are very relevant and urgent. Teenagers as the next generation of the nation need to be equipped with a deep understanding of the

dynamics of digital communication, practical skills in interacting effectively and responsibly online, and awareness of the potential risks and ethics in communicating in the cyber realm.

The youth of Al Ikhlah Jati Padang Mosque, South Jakarta are the target audience in this community service activity. Mosque youth, like youth in general, need skills to face the digital era. The ability to communicate competently online is an important asset for preaching, organizational activities, and positive social interactions. Al Ikhlah Jati Padang Mosque, South Jakarta has a clear organizational structure and is connected to the surrounding youth community. In addition to being an area with a significant youth population, Al Ikhlah Mosque is often the center of positive activities for youth in the surrounding area, such as religious studies, social activities, and self-development. On this basis, the Team chose Al Ikhlah Jati Padang Mosque Youth, South Jakarta as the audience in this strengthening.

This community service activity is expected to provide real contributions in empowering teenagers to become capable, intelligent, and ethical communicators in the digital era by strengthening communication skills and the importance of balance between digital interaction and social interaction. In addition, it is also expected to provide strengthening of the role of mosques in the digital era.

2. Method

The method of implementing this activity is carried out in several stages, namely situation analysis, planning and solutions, and the last is the implementation of activities. Situation analysis is carried out by determining and identifying problems found in the target of strengthening as a basis for providing solutions, in this case, namely adolescents, especially at the Al-Ikhlah Jatipadang Mosque, South Jakarta. Furthermore, the planning and solution stages, such as determining the time and place of implementation, to the preparation of counseling materials as a form of solution provided to the audience. Finally, the implementation of activities is where the planned solutions are implemented and, in this section, participants' understanding tests are carried out through *Pre-Tests* and *Post-Tests* as supporting activity evaluations.

Regarding the stages above, in more detail the implementation of the activity was carried out offline on Saturday, July 22, 2023, at 08.00 to 11.30 am at the Al-Ikhlah Jatipadang Mosque; Jalan. Ragunan Raya, Jatipadang, Pasar Minggu Area, South Jakarta, DKI Jakarta Province. Participants in this activity were mosque youth and those living around the area with a total of 25 people. The implementation of this activity is in the form of counseling based on methods in community education. This PkM (community services) activity includes providing an understanding of Communication as the Basis of Life, Polite Behavior; Smart Speaking and closed with Effective Communication Practices carried out by Dr. Sri Mustika, M.Si and Andys Tiara, S.Sos., M. I.Kom.



Figure 1. Documentation of Activities at the Al-Ikhlah Jatipadang Mosque, South Jakarta

3. Results and Discussion

Community service activities entitled 'Communication-savvy Teenagers: Improving the Ability to Become Reliable Communicators in the Digital Era' involving 25 teenage participants from the Al Ikhlas Jati Padang Mosque, South Jakarta; consisting of 40% female and 60% male showed a significant increase in understanding of communication concepts and practices both in real social and virtual worlds. Initial findings through *the Pre-Test* revealed misconceptions among participants regarding communication, including;

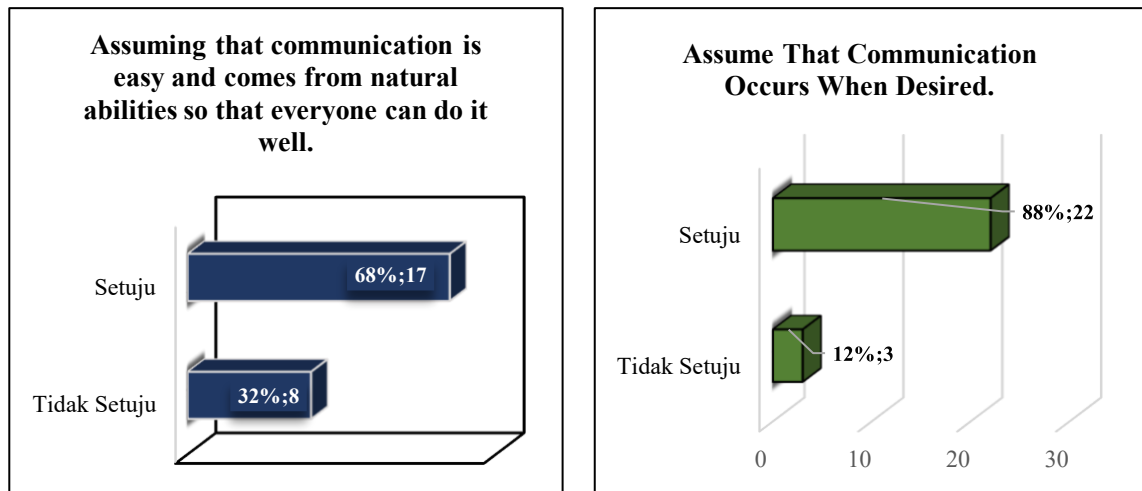


Figure 2. Participants' Misconceptions About Communication

Participants, namely teenagers, tend to consider communication skills as a natural talent so that everyone is able to do it well. They believe that communication is a talent, an innate trait, not acquired through learning. They even believe that by speaking by itself, humans are able to communicate. Pre-test data, as depicted in the graph, shows that the majority of participants (68% or 17 out of 25 teenagers) have a mistaken belief about this.

On this occasion, Andys Tiara, S.Sos., M.I.Kom as a resource person emphasized in his material that:

“Speaking is just one aspect of communication. Effective communication also involves active listening, understanding body language, writing clearly, understanding context (time, situation and/or place) and empathizing with others. Communication is not just about speaking, but about making others understand. Being used to communicating does not mean understanding communication. Understanding human communication means understanding what happens during communication, why it happens, what obstacles and consequences occur and ultimately what we can do to influence and maximize the results of the event.”

According to Mulyana, D., Phd, MA (2023) communication is not something easy. Communication is a skill that can be learned. Just like reading, writing, or riding a bicycle, effective communication is a skill that needs to be learned, practiced, and developed. Humans are not born with the ability to convey messages clearly, listen actively, or understand nonverbal communication. Although some people may have a natural tendency to interact more easily, everyone can improve their communication skills. Effective communication is an important skill that requires ongoing effort, learning, and practice.

In this reinforcement, the resource person tries to provide an overview of how the communication process occurs in life, such as by analogizing the "Iceberg Phenomenon", that to understand the complexity of communication as a whole, one can see it from both 'visible' and

'invisible' aspects. Like an iceberg, about 90% of the volume of the iceberg is below sea level and only one-tenth of the volume of the iceberg is above water, that's how the communication process that appears is only a small part of a larger problem.

Participants are given an understanding of how the 'invisible' aspects of communication need to be understood and considered in order to achieve effective communication both in the virtual and real world, such as; how meaning, learning, subjectivity, negotiation, culture, communication context, level of interaction, self-reference, self-reflection, ethics and the inevitable are invisible but significant parts in determining effective communication.

In this activity, participants were given stories and examples of negative cases such as how many people can fail because they are not skilled at communicating which is caused by a misunderstanding of how communication works, both through media and face-to-face, which shows that in reality communication is not as easy as expected and misconceptions by participants.

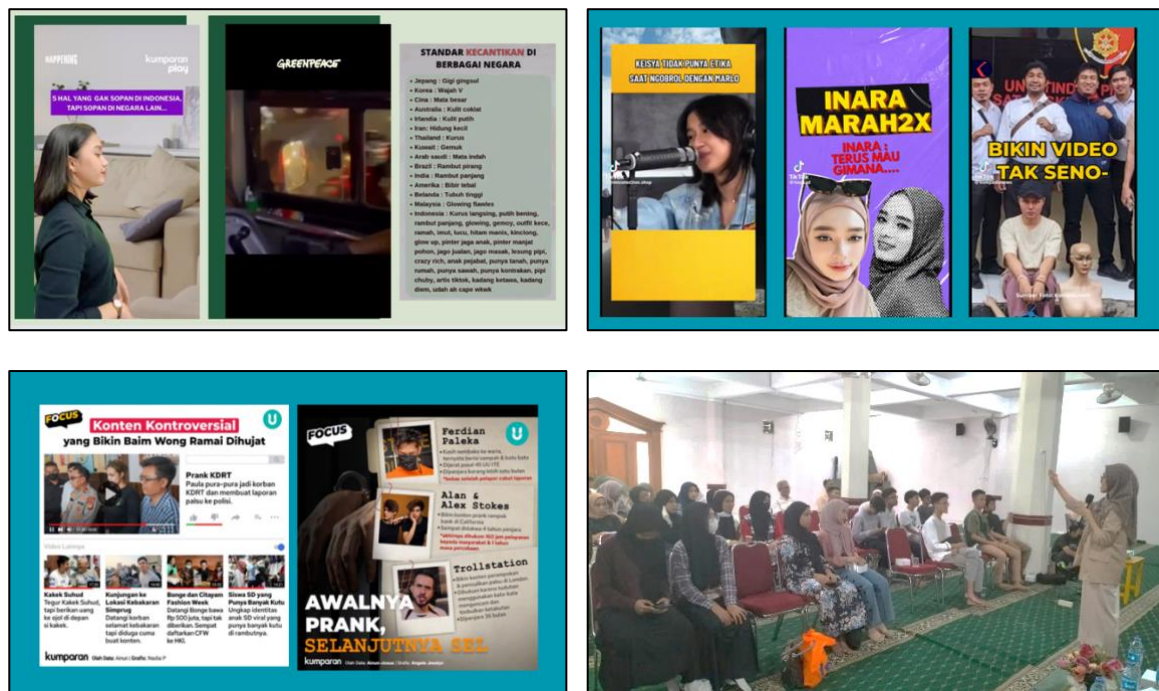


Figure 3. Explanation of Case Examples and Stories that Emphasize that Communication is a Complex and Complicated Thing, Not as Easy as One Thinks

In the professional world, participants are given an overview that effective communication is the foundation of success. Failure to communicate can cause various problems. Comedians or comedians to singers to famous artists who fail to communicate risk being abandoned by the audience, ridiculed, then forgotten and losing their popularity due to communication errors through controversial remarks, ambiguous comments from the context during interviews to poor communication styles and/or demeaning.

In this digital age, content creators have great influence, but also great responsibility for what they convey. Failure to consider the ethics and impact of content can be fatal. Instead of creating entertainment, it ends in prison and blasphemy. Content that contains hate speech, fake news (hoaxes), insults, or violates copyright can result in lawsuits and prison sentences.

These cases serve as a reminder of how crucial effective, responsible and ethical communication is in all aspects of life, especially in the professional world and in the public eye. The ability to convey a message clearly, respect the audience and consider the impact of every word and action is key to building and maintaining success and a good reputation.

Communication is actually an event in which there are dynamics that are so complex, dynamic, and systemic, especially now that the presence of the internet has also contributed to many changes in the way humans communicate so that it cannot be seen as something simple and easy to do. Discussing communication, in fact, cannot be interpreted as just how a message is conveyed (Rachmat Krisyantano, PD (2019).

Humans and whatever their jobs are required to be able to improve their communication skills, not only direct face-to-face communication, but also communication through communication technology such as; e-mail and social media, and how communication through technology is humane, polite and enlightening. Mulyana, D., & Phd, MA (2023), said that in principle, communication technology is a complement to face-to-face communication, not the other way around.

On the other hand, the misconceptions of the participants in this activity need to be corrected, namely, 88% (22 participants) agreed that communication occurs if desired, this indicates an understanding that needs to be considered in efforts to improve adolescent communication skills, because this is part of communication errors. Even all of them believe that there are certain times in human activities every day not to communicate, namely when worshipping (praying), being silent, eating, bathing and when on public transportation or other places where there is no exchange of messages with the other person. Dr. Sri Mustika, M.Si in this case provides reinforcement and corrects that:

“Communication touches all aspects of human life, it is always there, inherent, and unavoidable. The communication process occurs continuously throughout human life. Communication has an important position in life, whether or not all or part of a person's needs are fulfilled, to the success or failure of a person's life, these things can be determined and influenced by the communication skills they have.”

Communication can occur unintentionally, because it is inherent and unavoidable. Even when we do not intend to convey a message verbally, our bodies continue to “speak.” Facial expressions, posture, eye contact (or avoidance of it), and even silence can be interpreted by others. Communication is not just speaking through intended verbal messages, but there are nonverbal messages that are often received and interpreted without our conscious intention to “communicate” through them, but once others catch the message and begin to attach meaning to it whether it is said or not, then communication has occurred. Communication is a much broader and more complex phenomenon than the mere exchange of intentional words. It is an integral part of our social existence and continues to occur, whether we realize it or not.

Reinforcement of “Polite Behavior; Intelligent Speech” before the effective communication practice session, given to participants. Refreshing their memories about the important principles of good interaction and using effective language is important as a closing reinforcement in community service activities entitled 'Communication-Capable Teenagers: Improving the Ability to Become Reliable Communicators in the Digital Era'.

In the material, participants are given an understanding of things that are not liked during communication, such as: Monopolizing the Conversation; Not Being Aware of Body Language; Not Paying Attention to Language Style; Deviating from the Conversation Topic; Too Fast, Slow, and Loud in Delivering Messages; Interrogating; Interrupting; Talking When Others Are Talking; Aggressive; Up to Not Maintaining Eye Contact. Participants are also reminded to apply good and Islamic communication ethics in speaking and behaving which emphasizes leading to respectful, kind, and wise interactions.

Specifically, participants are reminded to be Intelligent in Speaking and Spoken in Behaving (Marwah, N. 2021), such as;

1. Saying things that are true and substantial; Avoid lying; and Talking to everyone in a good way (Qaulan Sadida)
2. Speaking according to the level of reason (intellectualism) of the person you are talking to (Qaulan Baligha).
3. Say good, useful and good things, and be appropriate, polite, use sarcasm (not harsh), and not hurt or offend; (Qaulan Ma'rufa).

4. Speak gently, in a voice that is soothing to hear, and full of friendliness, so that it touches the heart (Qaulan Layyina).
5. Saying noble words (glorifying not only based on words but from behavior), accompanied by respect and glorification, being comfortable to hear, being gentle, and having good manners (Qaulan Karima).
6. Speaking to make it easier for the communicant to understand (Saying words that are easy to digest, understand and comprehend) (Qaulan Maysura);

Good manners and eloquence are essential foundations for effective communication. Without them, the message delivered, no matter how good it is, may not be well received or may even lead to misunderstandings and conflict.



Figure 4. Effective Communication Practices

Next, effective communication practice and interactive Q&A sessions were the highlight of the activity. The practice session was conducted by means of real simulations through delivering responses to negative comment posts on *online platforms* wisely to test participants' understanding. In addition, participants were also asked to communicate behaviors that were not liked in order to increase self-awareness and understanding of the negative impacts of certain communication styles. This practice provides an in-depth learning experience and prepares participants to become more reliable and wise communicators in the digital era. The results of this community service activity succeeded in equipping the understanding and actions of the youth of the Al Ikhlas Jati Padang Mosque, South Jakarta with practical communication skills that are relevant to the needs of the digital era.

4. Conclusion

The results of this community service activity show that it can increase awareness and improve communication skills both online and offline to prepare them to become reliable communicators in the digital era. Through activities with ongoing support, these teenagers can become agents of positive change in their communities. Overall, the community service activity '*Remaja Cakap Komunikasi*' has a positive impact on 25 teenage participants from the Al Ikhlas Jati Padang Mosque. This activity not only increases their knowledge of communication in the digital era, but also changes their attitudes to be more confident and responsible in communicating, and equips them with practical skills that can be directly applied in everyday life. Based on the evaluation results, there was an increase in the participants' post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. This shows a significant increase in understanding effective communication material after participating in community service activities. In addition, 92% of participants stated that they were very satisfied with the training materials and methods used.

5. Acknowledgement

Community Service Activities entitled "Communication-savvy Youth: Improving the Ability to Become a Reliable Communicator in the Digital Era" can be carried out well and smoothly. This activity is part of the duties and obligations of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, especially in the

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