

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF ADOLESCENTS IN SURABAYA

Supriadi

Stikosa AWS

supriadi@stikosa-aws.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the relationship between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing among adolescents in Surabaya City. The urgency of this research is motivated by the phenomenon of declining adolescent social participation, increasing psychological pressure due to urbanization, and the need for an interpersonal relationship-based approach in an effort to maintain the mental health of the younger generation. This study used a quantitative approach with a *cross-sectional* correlational design. The sample consisted of 206 adolescents selected through *simple random sampling* technique. Data collection instruments included interpersonal communication skills questionnaire and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS). Data analysis was conducted using the Spearman Rank correlation test. The results showed a significant positive relationship between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing ($p= 0.000$; $\rho = 0.251$). This means that the higher the ability of adolescents to establish interpersonal communication - especially in terms of empathy, openness, and emotional support - the higher the level of psychological well-being they feel. Theoretically, this study refers to Interpersonal Communication Theory (Trenholm & Jensen) and Psychological Wellbeing Theory (Ryff), which explain the important role of communication in the formation of healthy social relationships and psychological balance. The findings contribute to the development of school and community-based communication intervention strategies as an effort to improve adolescent well-being in the modern era.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, *Psychological Wellbeing*, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Based on demographic data, Indonesia has a very significant number of youth. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the youth population aged 16 to 30 years reaches 65.82 million people or around 24% of the total national population (Indonesia, 2023). This age group is not only part of the productive workforce, but is also seen as the future leaders of the nation. However, reality shows that there are serious challenges related to the declining social participation of youth. A study in 2021 revealed that the level of youth involvement in community social activities

decreased to 70.49%, compared to 81.36% in 2018. This fact indicates a gap between the strategic potential of youth and their actual involvement in social life (Sulastri & Pratama, 2022) . At the community level, as in conventional youth organizations, many youth feel that the activities organized do not match their interests and lifestyles. Activities that are considered too formal, repetitive, and unresponsive to the dynamics of the younger generation become one of the factors inhibiting active participation. This condition reflects the lack of optimal interpersonal communication in the organization, as well as the lack of space for open, dialogical, and empathic interactions between members (Suko Widodo & Kristama, 2024) .

In this case, interpersonal communication plays an important role in supporting adolescent psychological wellbeing. Interactions based on openness, empathy, mutual trust, and emotional support can help adolescents deal with social pressure, manage emotions healthily, and build a positive identity (Hasibuan et al., 2023) . Conversely, ineffective communication can worsen the psychological condition of adolescents, such as increasing feelings of alienation, stress, and decreased self-confidence (Idris, 2013) .

Scientific literature suggests that interpersonal communication is closely linked to the formation of healthy social relationships, the availability of social support, and the emergence of a sense of belonging to a community—three key aspects of adolescent psychological well-being. Searle and Barbuto highlight the importance of leadership behaviors in shaping supportive communication environments (Searle & Barbuto, 2011) . Meanwhile, research by Decuyper, Pircher, and Verdorfer shows that servant leadership models not only positively impact team performance, but also strengthen social cohesion and individual psychological well-being through inclusive and supportive communication (Decuyper & Pircher Verdorfer, 2022) . The concept of psychological wellbeing in adolescents not only refers to the absence of mental disorders, but also includes positive experiences such as self-acceptance, personal growth, a sense of purpose in life, and quality relationships with others (Decuyper & Pircher Verdorfer, 2022) . These aspects are strongly influenced by the quality of interaction and communication experienced by adolescents in various environments, including family, school, and community.

Against this background, this study aims to explore and analyze the relationship between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing of adolescents in Surabaya City. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of adolescent communication, as well as a basis for designing communication intervention strategies that are more adaptive, empathic, and contextual in answering the challenges of psychological well-being of the younger generation in the modern urban era.

METHOD

Definition of Communication Science

Humans are individuals who in their social lives intersect with communication activities between humans. communication is the process of conveying information, ideas, emotions, and messages between individuals or groups through various media. The main focus of communication science is understanding how messages are created, delivered, received, and understood in various contexts (Herlina et al., 2023)

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication according to Trenholm Jensen refers to dyadic communication between people. Dyadic communication involves only two individuals communicating face-to-face. Face-to-face communication between one person and another may be without involving communication media (secondary interpersonal communication) or through communication media (primary interpersonal communication) such as letters and telephone (Panuju, 2018) .

Interpersonal communication activities occupy the highest frequency in social life between humans. Participants in interpersonal communication play a flexible role and feed back or respond as much as possible. The role of the participant in question refers to the spontaneity (instant feedback) of the recipient of the message in response to the verbal or nonverbal message of the sender of the message (Panuju, 2018) .

2.1.1 Characteristics of Interpersonal Communication include:

1) Two-way Message Flow

Two-way flow guides the pattern of message dissemination, because the position of the source is placed parallel to the position of the message recipient. Sources and recipients can exchange roles as communicators or communicants immediately, allowing a two-way message flow to occur continuously.

2) Informal atmosphere

The informal atmosphere is characteristic of interpersonal communication because the nature of friendship is the approach taken between individuals. Intimate conversations and informal communication forums are an option in interpersonal communication.

3) Immediate Feedback

Feedback in the form of verbal and non-verbal messages can be immediately known by the communication actors because both parties are involved in face-to-face meetings during communication (Milyane & Dkk, 2022) .

2.1.2 Effective Interpersonal Communication

Effective interpersonal communication occurs the process of exchanging information, thoughts, and feelings between two or more individuals in a clear, open, and mutually understanding way will benefit both parties in accordance with its function to form and maintain good relationships between individuals, convey knowledge or information, change attitudes and behavior, solve human relations problems, better self-image, and the path to success (Milyane & Dkk, 2022) .

2.1.3 Psychological Wellbeing Measurement Tools

Measuring *Psychological Wellbeing* using the *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale* (WEMWBS). A total of 855 Indonesian samples completed 14 items in the Indonesian version of the WEMWBS where most described your experiences over the past 2 weeks (Brown et al., 2012) . Rasch analysis showed that the data fit the model, item-person reliability was above 0.8, and item-person separation was above the minimum requirement. All items in the instrument have met the criteria for index statistics in terms of clothing mean squares as all item-measure correlations are above 0.4 (Wicaksono et al., 2021) . In addition, the CFI value of 0.77, SRMR of 0.09, and GFI of 0.84 indicate that the estimated model is close to the degree of fit model. Composite reliability for the *eudamonic latent variable is reliable* with the achievement of a coefficient of 0.631 (p-values > 0.6) (Hartanto, 2017) . Each of the 14 statement responses in the WEMWBS was scored from 1 to 5, from 'never' to 'always'. The total score is calculated by summing the 14 individual statement scores. The minimum score is 14 and the maximum is 70 (Brown et al., 2012) .

DISCUSSION

This study empirically confirmed a significant correlation between the quality of interpersonal communication and the level of psychological wellbeing of adolescents in Surabaya. Based on statistical analysis using Spearman Rank, a significance value of $p = 0.000$ and a correlation coefficient (ρ) = 0.251 were obtained. Although in the weak correlation category, this relationship is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$), which means there is a positive relationship between the two variables. This finding reinforces the assumption that adolescents with better interpersonal communication skills tend to have a healthier and more prosperous psychological state.

1. Deepening the Relationship between Interpersonal Communication and Psychological Wellbeing

Conceptually, the link between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing has long been recognized in the literature of humanistic psychology and interpersonal communication theory. Quality interpersonal communication includes dimensions of openness, empathy, mutual trust, emotional support, and the ability to give and receive feedback. When these elements are present in adolescents' social interactions, they not only feel accepted and valued, but also have the psychological space to express themselves, manage emotional distress, and build self-identity positively.

The value of $\rho = 0.251$ indicates that interpersonal communication does contribute to improving psychological well-being, but the contribution is not dominant. In other words, psychological wellbeing is a multidimensional condition that is also influenced by other external factors such as family environment, wider social relations, economic status, and previous life experiences. Therefore, interpersonal communication serves as one of the important, but not the only determinant in supporting adolescents' mental well-being.

2. Descriptive Analysis of Interpersonal Communication Ability

Descriptive data showed that the majority of respondents (74.8%) were in the medium category in terms of interpersonal communication skills, while 13.6% were classified as high and 11.7% were in the low category. This composition shows that most adolescents in Surabaya have adequate interpersonal communication skills, but have not reached the ideal level that allows optimal psychological wellbeing.

The findings also indicate that basic communication skills such as active listening, showing empathy, and providing verbal and nonverbal support still need further development. Training based on experiential learning or peer-led education approaches can be an effective strategy to shape deep and reflective communication habitus among adolescents. This intervention is very important, especially considering

the social reality of today's urban adolescents who are heavily influenced by digital communication which tends to be shallow and lack direct emotional contact.

3. Differences in Communication Skills by Age

Another interesting finding is the difference in interpersonal communication skills based on age group. In the cross tabulation, it was found that the adolescent age group (17-30 years old) was more dominant in the moderate category on the interpersonal communication skills scale (78.03%), compared to the young adult group who tended to be more spread in the low and high categories.

These results are consistent with Erikson's psychosocial developmental framework, in which adolescents are in a stage of identity vs. role confusion that encourages them to more actively seek social connectedness and role exploration (Sataøen et al., 2024) . Adolescents tend to be more flexible, responsive to social dynamics, and open to new communication experiences. In contrast, young adults are generally faced with more demanding socio-economic responsibilities, which may affect their interaction patterns and social sensitivities. This fact confirms that the adolescent phase is a strategic moment for interventions to strengthen interpersonal communication within the framework of long-term psychological well-being.

4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this study provide empirical validation of the effective interpersonal communication model proposed by Trenholm and Jensen (Jensen & Meckling, 2015) , which emphasizes the dimensions of openness, empathy, emotional support, and the ability to respond actively as the main components in healthy interpersonal relationships. These results are also in line with Decuyper & Pircher's concept of attentive communication which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal attention in building social cohesion and psychological well-being (Decuyper & Pircher Verdorfer, 2022).

The practical implications of these findings are highly relevant for educational institutions and youth development agencies. Communication training programs based on empathy, reflective dialogue, conflict management, and active listening skills can be designed to holistically improve adolescents' interpersonal communication skills. In addition, community-based approaches such as youth peer support groups and emotional literacy circles can be strategic platforms to increase the intensity and quality of interpersonal communication in a sustainable manner.

5. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

Despite its strengths in terms of sample size (n=206), this study still has limitations. One of the main obstacles is the method of data collection through an online platform (Google Form), which makes it difficult to directly verify the psychological conditions

and social context of the respondents. In addition, the correlational research design did not allow for a direct causal relationship between the variables of interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing to be tested.

A recommendation for future research is to adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with in-depth qualitative interviews. This could enrich the understanding of how subjective experiences of interpersonal communication shape adolescents' perceptions and psychological well-being. In addition, it is necessary to expand the research variables by including other dimensions such as family climate, gender relations, emotional intelligence, and social media dynamics as intermediary factors in the construction of psychological wellbeing of urban adolescents.

Results This study examines the relationship between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing in adolescents in Surabaya. Through a quantitative approach with correlation method and Spearman analysis, it was found that there was a significant positive relationship between the two variables ($p = 0.000$; $\rho = 0.251$). The results show that adolescents with better interpersonal communication skills tend to have higher levels of psychological well-being. This finding confirms the importance of empathic, open, and supportive communication in supporting adolescents' mental health, and provides a basis for the development of communication intervention programs in educational and community settings.

CONCLUSION

There is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal communication and psychological wellbeing among adolescents in Surabaya ($p = 0.000$; $\rho = 0.251$). These results indicate that the higher the interpersonal communication skills of adolescents - especially in the aspects of empathy, openness, and emotional support - the higher their level of psychological well-being. Healthy interpersonal communication proved to be an important factor in supporting adolescents' emotional stability, self-confidence, and quality of social relationships.

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