USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING THROUGH INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION FOR MIGRANTS WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This community service program is titled "Using Social Media to Improve Emotional Wellbeing Through Interpersonal Communication for Migrant Workers in Malaysia". The main objective of this activity is to utilize social media as a tool to improve the emotional wellbeing of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia through improved interpersonal communication. Through training in the use of social media platforms, especially Telegram, participants are taught how to build and maintain strong social relationships, share experiences, and get emotional support virtually. This approach is expected to reduce social isolation, address stigma related to mental health, and strengthen inclusive communities among migrant workers. This program supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 10, and 17 by reducing the risk of mental disorders, reducing social inequality, and building strategic partnerships for the sustainability of the support platform. Indicators of success include active participation of at least 70% and an increase in emotional wellbeing as measured through surveys or interviews, such as increased life satisfaction and reduced feelings of loneliness. It is hoped that this activity can be an innovative model in utilizing social media to support interpersonal communication and mental wellbeing of migrant workers in Malaysia in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Social Media, Emotional Wellbeing, Interpersonal Communication, Migrants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian migrant workers abroad, particularly in Malaysia, often face significant emotional challenges due to social isolation and separation from family. Loneliness and limited communication with loved ones leave many migrant workers feeling depressed and anxious. They are often isolated in unfamiliar surroundings, away from the social support they need to maintain their mental health. This creates gaps in their broader social experiences, which in turn impact their quality of life.

In this context, interpersonal communication becomes essential for maintaining emotional and social connectedness, which can help reduce loneliness. Interpersonal communication theory emphasises the importance of direct interaction and more personalised relationships in managing emotions and fostering stronger bonds between individuals. Through intense and meaningful communication, individuals can offer each other emotional support, share their feelings, and promote a stronger sense of community despite being separated by distance. Thus, effective interpersonal communication, such as that which occurs in social media groups, can be a solution to reduce feelings of isolation among migrant workers.

One solution that can be pursued is to utilise technology, especially social media, to build social networks and communities that support each other. Social media platforms, such as Telegram, WhatsApp, or Facebook, provide a means for migrant workers to stay connected, share experiences, receive moral support, and feel more connected to the outside world. In this increasingly digital world, technology can serve as a link between individuals who are far apart, bridging communication gaps that were previously difficult to overcome due to geographical and physical limitations.

However, not all migrant workers can optimally utilise this technology. Some of them may face limited knowledge of using applications or technical difficulties when operating digital communication tools. Therefore, training on how to use social media effectively and wisely is essential. The training aims to enhance migrant workers' ability to manage and utilise communication technology as a means to maintain their emotional well-being through healthy communication, sharing news, and fostering a sense of community, among other benefits.

The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory provides a relevant perspective. SCOT argues that technology is not just taken for granted, but is shaped by the social groups that use it and how they interpret it in their daily lives.

In this case, social media technologies such as Telegram or WhatsApp are not just passive tools used by migrant workers, but become an integral part of their social construction, enabling more meaningful communication. The migrant worker community will create new norms, values, and ways of interacting within these platforms, so that these applications are not only a means of communication but also a means of building their social identity, sharing life experiences, and overcoming problems.

Furthermore, network actor theory also provides an essential understanding of contextualising the use of social media among migrant workers. This theory emphasises the importance of the role of actors and the relationships between actors in social networks to create sustainable interaction dynamics. In the context of migrant workers in Malaysia, they can be seen as actors who interact with each other through a more extensive communication network facilitated by social media platforms. The use of applications such as Telegram enables the creation of a vast social network, allowing users to connect with others who are in different geographical or social positions. Each interaction within this network plays a crucial role in strengthening social ties, providing emotional support, and fostering a sense of community and solidarity among migrant workers.

By utilising social media as a more open and inclusive means of interpersonal communication, migrant workers can reduce their loneliness and strengthen their social networks. For example, communication within interest- or work-location-based groups can reduce feelings of isolation, build solidarity, and maintain a sense of community. This is where SCOT theory and Network Actor Theory play a crucial role in helping us understand how technology, through social media, can be adapted and utilised by migrant workers to meet their social and emotional needs.

The urgency of this community service activity is related to the challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) abroad, particularly in Malaysia, due to their socio-psychological situation. This has become a problem that requires serious attention, especially in the context of their emotional and social well-being. Migrant workers often face significant difficulties in adapting to life in a foreign country, exacerbated by separation from their families and social environment. Their isolated existence far from home and without sufficient emotional support often leads to feelings of loneliness, anxiety and stress.

In addition, with unfamiliar conditions and limited ability to communicate with those closest to them, migrant workers often feel neglected and marginalised in their social lives. This affects not only their mental health but also their overall quality of life. Therefore, it is crucial to provide solutions that are not only technology-based but also build social connections to ease the emotional strain.

With the development of communication technology, social media can serve as an effective platform for building social support networks among migrant workers. However, despite widespread access to technology, many migrant workers still do not fully understand how to utilise social media effectively for their social and emotional needs. Therefore, training on the wise and practical use of social media is crucial. This is not only to enhance their technological skills but also to provide them with tools to alleviate feelings of isolation and enhance their emotional well-being.

Success in implementing the use of social media as an effective communication tool among migrant workers will largely depend on their understanding of the social norms, values, and ways of interacting that emerge on these platforms. This will create a space where migrant workers can not only communicate but also build solidarity and a sense of community, which is crucial for their mental health. Therefore, this training activity is urgently needed so that migrant workers can better manage their emotional well-being despite being away from their families and homeland.

2.   METHOD

This community service activity was conducted over six days, from May 3 to May 6, 2025, encompassing activities such as planning the program, collecting data, analysing it, and reporting the results. The community service took place in Penang, Malaysia.

Method of Implementation of Community Service Program

This community service activity will be carried out systematically, utilising a community-based approach and social media as the primary tool to enhance the emotional well-being of migrant workers. This method consists of several main stages:

1. Identification of Participants and Program Opening

The initial stage aims to reach migrant workers in Malaysia and ensure they have access to this program. Activities carried out in this stage include:

A. Data Collection and Program Socialisation

 i. Disseminating information about the program through employment agencies, migrant worker communities, and Indonesian labour organisations in Malaysia.
 ii. Utilisation of social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram, to connect with prospective participants and disseminate information about the program's benefits.

B. Program Opening and Concept Introduction

 i. Introductory session explaining the objectives of the program and the role of social media in improving interpersonal communication and emotional well-being.
 ii. Initial discussion regarding communication challenges experienced by migrant workers and their expectations for this program.

2. Social Media Training

The training will be provided in an interactive tutorial and workshop format with an easy-to-understand approach. The materials provided include:

A. Basic Use of Social Media for Interpersonal Communication

 i. How to create and optimise social media accounts such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, and Instagram.
 ii. Privacy and Security Management in Online Communication.
 iii. Use of group features, community forums, and live streaming to build social engagement.

B. Effective Communication Techniques on Digital Platforms

 i. Active listening skills and responding to messages with empathy.
 ii. Strategies for building positive conversations and avoiding conflict in online interactions.
 iii. How to express emotions healthily through social media.

C. Positive Content Creation for Emotional Well-being

 i. How to create posts that build enthusiasm and togetherness.
 ii. Utilising social media to share experiences and get emotional support.
 iii. Filtering useful information and avoiding the negative impacts of social media.

3. Formation of Community Groups

After the training, participants will be divided into several small groups based on interests or work locations. The goal is to create a safe and supportive interaction space for migrant workers.

A. Formation of Online Discussion Groups

 i. Each group will have a WhatsApp or Telegram group facilitated by a mentor to share experiences and provide emotional support.

ii. This group will serve as a forum for active communication and mutual support among migrant workers.

A. Social Sharing and Support Activities

  i. Thematic discussion sessions on experiences of working abroad, emotional challenges, and strategies for overcoming them.
  ii. Sharing sessions with resource persons, such as psychologists or senior migrant workers who have successfully managed their emotional well-being.

B. Application of Skills Taught in the Training

  i. Participants will be guided to apply healthier interpersonal communication strategies in daily interactions on social media.
  ii. Monitoring of social media usage to ensure participants practice positive communication techniques.

4. Mentoring and Monitoring

This stage aims to ensure the sustainability of the program's impact and support participants in applying the skills they have learned.

A. Participant Activity Monitoring

  i. The mentoring team will observe participants' interactions in community groups and provide regular feedback.
  ii. Evaluation of changes in participants' communication methods and emotional well-being will be carried out in stages.

B. Ongoing Consultation and Discussion Sessions

  i. Conducting online discussion sessions to explore the challenges participants face when communicating interpersonally through social media.
  ii. Providing individual consultation sessions for participants who need further guidance.

C. Program Evaluation

  i. Post-training survey to measure changes in participants' emotional well-being.
  ii. In-depth interviews with several participants to explore their experiences during the program.
  iii. Compiling an evaluation report to identify successes and aspects that can be improved in the program.

5. Preparation of Digital Guidelines and Publication

As a sustainability step, this program will produce digital guides and educational materials that migrant workers can use in the future.

A. Preparation of Digital Guidelines

  i. Preparation of e-books or modules that contain social media-based interpersonal communication techniques to enhance emotional well-being.
  ii. These guides will be shared online through community groups and migrant worker organisations.

B. Creation of Educational Content

  i. Short videos and infographics discussing interpersonal communication strategies, how to build social support on social media, and the importance of maintaining emotional well-being.
  ii. This content will be disseminated through social media platforms and migrant worker communities.

C. Dissemination and Publication

    i. Dissemination of program results through social media, webinars, and collaboration with migrant worker communities and related organisations.

    ii. Publication of community service reports as a reference for academics and policymakers who want to develop similar programs.

Implementation of Community Service Socialisation

This community service is carried out through socialisation activities that focus on the use of social media to improve emotional well-being through interpersonal communication for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. This activity is in collaboration with the Indonesian Community Development Association (PERMAI) on Penang Island. This organisation is actively involved in fostering and providing support to Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.

Socialization Targets

The primary target of this activity is 50 Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) working in Malaysia across various sectors, including domestic work, manufacturing, services, and construction. The selection of

Socialization Methods

Socialisation is carried out through several stages to ensure participants understand the material presented. The methods used include:

1. Presentation of Material on the Use of Social Media to Improve Emotional Well-Being

This session aims to provide migrant workers with an understanding of how social media can be utilised positively in fostering interpersonal communication and promoting emotional well-being. The materials presented include:

A. The Role of Social Media in the Lives of Migrant Workers

    i. How social media can be a means to stay connected with family and friends in Indonesia.

    ii. Utilisation of social media as a space for sharing experiences and emotional support between migrant workers.

    iii. The positive and negative impacts of using social media on emotional well-being.

B. Strategies for Communicating Interpersonally Through Social Media

    i. Techniques for building supportive social relationships and avoiding conflict in online communication.

    ii. How to convey good messages to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

    iii. Strategies for managing emotions in digital conversations to avoid stress and psychological pressure.

C. Creating Positive Content on Social Media

    i. How to create and share content that can inspire and build community spirit.

    ii. Avoiding the spread of hoax news, hate speech, or content that has the potential to cause conflict.

    iii. Utilisation of social media features, such as community groups, live streaming, or discussion forums, to strengthen social engagement.

2. Material Delivery Accompanied by Partner Team in Malaysia

To make the socialisation more effective and relevant to the conditions of migrant workers in Malaysia, the delivery of the material will be carried out together with the Partner Team in Malaysia, consisting of:

A. Representatives of PERMAI Pulau Penang who understand the social conditions and challenges faced by migrant workers.
B. Migrant worker community leaders who have experience in building positive interpersonal communication networks.
C. Communication experts or psychologists who can provide perspectives on the psychological impact of social media use on emotional well-being.

Accompaniment by this partner team allows participants to gain more contextual insights, based on the direct experiences of migrant workers and real solutions that have been implemented in their communities.

3. Q&A Session

This session provides an opportunity for participants to understand better the material that has been presented by:

A. Interactive Discussion: Participants can share personal experiences related to the use of social media and how it affects their emotional well-being.
B. Problem Solving: The facilitator team will provide solutions to the obstacles participants face when using social media as a tool for interpersonal communication.
C. Conversation Simulation: Several participants will be invited to do a simulation of interpersonal communication on social media to practice more positive and supportive communication techniques.

This Q&A session is expected to provide a deeper understanding and help participants apply the material presented in their daily lives.

Activity evaluation involves collecting data and information needed for the training program. Training evaluation is more focused on reviewing the training process and assessing training outcomes and the impact of the movement. Training evaluation serves as a process controller for the results of the training program, ensuring that a systematic, effective, and efficient training program can be guaranteed. Training evaluation aims to gather information on the effectiveness of the training program and incorporates feedback from trainees, which helps improve the training through the use of questionnaires.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this activity, the focus is not only on the migrant workers themselves, but also on their relatives and families in Indonesia, who are part of Generation Z. This group is very familiar with social media and digital technology. This approach adopts SCOT and NAT principles to ensure active participation, content relevance, and sustainability in supporting their emotional well-being through healthy interpersonal communication.

In the context of families and generation Z who are familiar with social media, the combined application of Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and Network Actor Theory (NAT) principles not only helps them in devising effective communication strategies, but also ensures that the technology used is appropriate and supports the social dynamics and norms of the family. Here are the details of the implementation:

1. Actor Involvement and Social Norms-Based Technology Development (SCOT)
A. Participation of Actors as Co-Creators
   i. Through online and offline discussion forums, families and Generation Z were involved as key actors in the process of designing content and social media platforms.
   ii. They provided input on the types of messages that were appropriate, including polite and empathetic language, as well as images and themes that were sensitive to cultural norms and family values.
   iii. Content development was based on real-life experiences and personal stories from families, including accounts of emotional support provided to migrant workers abroad who experienced stress.
B. Tailoring Technology to Culture and Values
   i. Social media content and features are designed to align with the family values of warmth and mutual support, which are key norms in Indonesian culture.

ii.   Features such as status sharing, stories, and short videos are designed to strengthen emotional bonds and facilitate transparent communication between family members.

2. Strengthening Social Networks and Actor Capabilities (NAT)

A. Identification and Empowerment of Actors in the Network

i.   Identify key figures (parents, siblings, family leaders) as spearheads in building supportive and empathetic communication through social media.
ii.   Provide training to help them effectively utilise social media features, such as creating heartfelt content, managing family discussion groups, and sending thoughtful messages.

B. Strengthening Networks and Emotional Solidarity

i.   Help families establish a robust social network that encompasses not only formal communication but also fosters opportunities for sharing experiences, addressing concerns, and providing ongoing emotional support.
ii.   Developing regular activities such as virtual "Sharing Moments" led by family members, as well as social media campaigns that foster empathy and unity.

3. Relevant and Sustainable Communication Strategies

A. Using Familiar and Enjoyable Social Media

i.   Developing interactive content such as quizzes, storytelling challenges, and heartfelt videos to evoke empathy and a sense of closeness.
ii.   Integrating familiar communication technologies like WhatsApp and TikTok, enabling families and Generation Z to create and customise content based on their experiences and needs.

B. Empathy-Based Communication Skills Training

i.   Training families to convey emotionally healthy and constructive messages, such as avoiding a critical tone, using more motivational words, and actively guiding communication.
ii.   Instilling the importance of listening and understanding emotionally through the messages and videos they create and share.

4. Managing Social Dynamics and Improving Network Quality

A. Strengthening Trust and Solidarity

i.   Through regular discussion forums and collaborative activities, all actors in the family network trust each other and feel responsible for the emotional well-being of members who are far away abroad.
ii.   Create family discussion groups with moderators who can navigate social dynamics to maintain a positive and supportive environment.

B. Conducting Regular Evaluations and Monitoring

i.   Through online surveys and direct feedback from family members, adjustments are made to communication strategies and content to ensure they remain relevant and practical.
ii.   Using indicators such as improved emotional communication, reduced anxiety and stress, and enhanced quality of digital interactions.

To support the success of the activity "Using Social Media to Improve Emotional Wellbeing through Interpersonal Communication for Migrant Workers in Malaysia," the application of the principles of Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and Network Actor Theory (NAT) is crucial, while considering Indonesian cultural values and prevailing family norms. This approach aims to produce relevant and supportive content and communication strategies that strengthen social cohesion within families, while maintaining diversity and promoting tolerance.

I.   The SCOT Approach in Technology and Content Development

The SCOT approach emphasises the active role of social actors, namely families and Generation Z, as co-creators in developing and adapting digital content and platforms.

Strategic steps and implementation:

1.   Participation of Actors as Co-Creators:
Through online and offline discussion forums, families and Generation Z are encouraged to actively provide input on the types of content that are most relevant and in line with their social norms. They are involved in

designing content such as success story videos, motivational messages full of love, and family experience stories that contain values of cooperation and kinship.

2. Adapting Content to Culture and Social Norms:
The content developed incorporates traditional and cultural elements of Indonesia, such as folk tales, proverbs, regional songs, and rituals, which demonstrate emotional closeness and foster tolerance.
For example, using proverbs such as "The bond of love between families is strong because it is rooted in love and trust" as a soothing message that also reinforces the values of tolerance and harmony.

II.   The NAT Approach in Strengthening Networks and Actor Capacities

The NAT approach emphasises the importance of building and strengthening social networks consisting of key actors within families and communities.

Strategic steps and implementation:

1. Identification and Empowerment of Actors:
Identifying key figures such as parents, older siblings, and other family members as the vanguard of supportive emotional communication. They are trained, particularly in effectively utilising social media features to convey messages that are full of empathy and affection.
2. Strengthening Social Networks:
Assisting families in creating regular discussion groups on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram, facilitated by experienced moderators. Within these groups, family members can continuously share experiences, stories, and emotional support, thereby strengthening feelings of solidarity and social and cultural cohesion.

III.   Integrating SCOT and NAT Principles in Content Development and Strategy

By integrating the concepts of technology as a social construct (SCOT) and social networks as a collective force (NAT), this strategy ensures that digital products and content consistently align with the social and cultural dynamics of Indonesian families and the characteristics of Generation Z.

Practical steps:

1. Culture- and Tolerance-Based Content Development:
   a. Creating videos and graphics that showcase Indonesian families who can maintain harmony and support each other despite being far apart.
   b. Using inspirational stories that contain values of mutual respect and appreciation for diversity, as well as instilling messages about the importance of tolerance between religious and ethnic groups.
2. Digital Dialogue Based on Family and Cultural Values:
   a. Use social media as a platform for empathetic and understanding dialogue, instilling values of harmony, mutual assistance, and emotional balance.
   b. Adapt Indonesian cultural language and symbols, such as regional songs, batik motifs, and folk tales that are soothing and strengthen emotional bonding.

4. CONCLUSION

This activity highlights the importance of integrating the principles of Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and Network Actor Theory (NAT) in developing culturally relevant and sustainable communication strategies for families and Generation Z, particularly in the context of migrant workers' emotional well-being. By actively involving families as co-creators and strengthening social networks through digital platforms, the approach ensures that content and communication strategies are aligned with social norms, cultural values, and familial bonds. The combined application of SCOT and NAT fosters empathy, tolerance, and emotional support, ultimately contributing to improved family cohesion and mental health resilience among migrant workers and their families in Penang, Malaysia. This approach also emphasises the significance of cultural sensitivity and community participation in designing technology-driven interventions.

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