

POLA KOMUNIKASI EFEKTIF DAN IMPLIKASINYA TERHADAP KESEJAHTERAAN PSIKOLOGIS TARUNA PELAYARAN

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF SAILING CADETS

Dita Romadhoni¹, Muhammad David¹, Sabaruddin², R. Bagus Wicaksono³, Ahmad Gifari M²

¹Program Studi Sistem Kelistrikan Kapal, Politeknik Pelayaran Malahayati, Aceh Besar, Indonesia

²Program Studi Studi Nautika, Politeknik Pelayaran Malahayati, Aceh Besar, Indonesia

³Program Studi Permesinan Kapal, Politeknik Pelayaran Malahayati, Aceh Besar, Indonesia

email: muhddavid@poltekpelaceh.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan maritim ditandai dengan sistem asrama, struktur hierarkis, dan tingkat stres fisik dan psikologis yang tinggi. Dalam konteks ini, pola komunikasi memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk kesejahteraan psikologis para taruna. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti dinamika pola komunikasi di antara para taruna dan antara taruna dan staf pengajar, serta implikasinya terhadap kesejahteraan psikologis mereka. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi kasus di Politeknik Maritim Malahayati, Aceh. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan studi dokumentasi, dengan total 15 partisipan (10 taruna dan 5 instruktur). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola komunikasi dalam lingkungan pendidikan maritim didominasi oleh komunikasi hierarkis satu arah, dengan komunikasi horizontal dan terbuka hanya terjadi dalam konteks informal. Taruna yang mengalami komunikasi terbuka dan suporitif menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam aspek kesejahteraan psikologis, seperti penurunan stres (85%), peningkatan motivasi (82%), dan rasa keterhubungan sosial yang lebih kuat (90%). Staf pengajar memiliki peran strategis dalam menciptakan iklim komunikasi yang sehat melalui pemberian umpan balik yang konstruktif dan pendekatan yang empatik. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa komunikasi yang efektif merupakan fondasi penting untuk mengembangkan ketahanan mental taruna dan mendukung transformasi pendidikan maritim yang lebih humanistik. Hasil penelitian diharapkan dapat menjadi referensi untuk pengembangan kebijakan komunikasi dan layanan psikososial di lembaga pendidikan maritim.

Kata kunci: Komunikasi Efektif; Kesejahteraan Psikologis; Kadet Maritim; Pendidikan Maritim; Pendekatan Empiris

ABSTRACT

Maritime education is characterized by a boarding system, a hierarchical structure, and high levels of physical and psychological stress. In this context, communication patterns play a crucial role in shaping the psychological well-being of cadets. This study aims to examine the dynamics of communication patterns among cadets and between cadets and teaching staff, and their implications for their psychological well-being. The research method used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach at the Malahayati Maritime Polytechnic, Aceh. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies, with a total of 15 participants (10 cadets and 5 instructors). The results showed that communication patterns in the maritime education environment were dominated by one-way hierarchical communication, with horizontal and open communication only occurring in informal contexts. Cadets who experienced open and supportive communication showed significant improvements in aspects of psychological well-being, such as reduced stress (85%), increased motivation (82%), and a stronger sense of social connectedness (90%). Teaching staff have a strategic role in creating a healthy communication climate through providing constructive feedback and an empathetic approach. This study concludes that effective communication is a crucial foundation for developing cadet mental resilience and supporting a more humanistic transformation of maritime education. The results are expected to serve as

a reference for developing communication policies and psychosocial services in maritime educational institutions.

Keywords: *Effective Communication; Psychological Well-being; Maritime Cadets; Maritime Education; Empirical Approach*

1. Introduction

Maritime education is a comprehensive form of vocational education, encompassing technical training, military discipline, and character development and professional ethics. This education system requires cadets to undergo an intensive learning process in a boarding environment, with interactions that are strongly hierarchical and subject to physical and mental stress (IMO, 2022). In this context, psychological aspects are often marginalized compared to a focus solely on technical competency.

One key factor contributing to the psychological well-being of cadets is the communication patterns established in the educational environment. Healthy, open, and supportive communication plays a crucial role in building a positive learning climate, strengthening psychological resilience, and encouraging active engagement in the learning process (Adler & Towne, 2013). Conversely, communication patterns that are authoritative, one-way, and lacking empathy can lead to emotional stress, anxiety, and even burnout (Goleman, 1998).

The following is a horizontal bar graph visualizing the psychosocial challenges faced by maritime cadets, based on qualitative data. The graph shows that academic and practical stress are the biggest challenges (38%), followed by social conflict and adaptation difficulties.

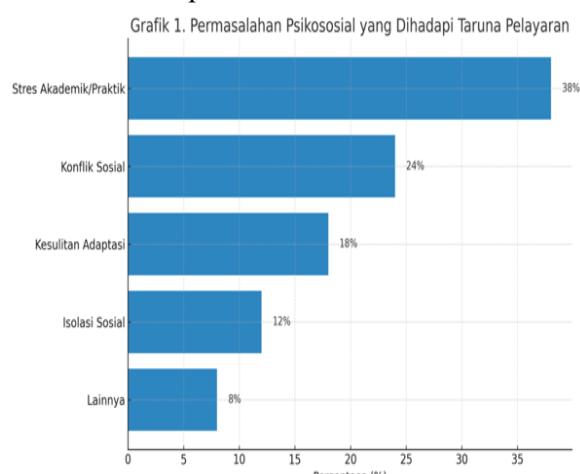


Figure 1. Graph of the Influence of Communication Patterns on Aspects of Psychological Well-being of Cadets
(Source: Research Data)

The data indicates that most of the cadets' problems stem from ineffective social interactions and communication. This highlights the urgency of addressing communication patterns as a strategy to improve the psychological well-being of cadets.

Communication in maritime education is not just a means of exchanging information, but also a medium for building social relationships, team cohesion, and emotional development. Poor communication can lead to conflict, stress, and even burnout, while good communication fosters a spirit of learning, togetherness, and resilience in the face of challenges.

In the context of maritime education, there are three main actors in the communication chain: cadets, fellow cadets, and instructors. All three are involved in a learning process fraught with pressure, discipline demands, and high cognitive and affective expectations. Therefore, the quality of communication patterns is crucial for the successful development of maritime character and professional work readiness.

However, to date, research explicitly addressing the relationship between communication patterns and the psychological well-being of maritime cadets is limited. Previous studies have focused more on the technical aspects of sailing, without delving deeply into the psychosocial aspects.

This research aims to:

- Examining the dynamics of effective communication patterns among maritime cadets.
- Exploring the influence of communication patterns on psychological well-being.
- Explain the strategic role of teaching staff in creating a healthy communication environment.

This research is important to answer the challenges of maritime education in the current era which not only prioritizes technical competence, but also social competence and mental toughness (soft skills). The findings are expected to serve as a reference for developing more humanistic and inclusive internal communication management policies for maritime education institutions.

These findings indicate that most of the cadets' psychosocial problems are closely related to the dynamics of interaction and communication within the institution. In a maritime education system that emphasizes discipline and obedience, space for emotional expression and two-way communication is often limited. This creates the potential for prolonged psychological distress.

In this context, it's important to view communication not simply as a means of conveying information, but as a process of building relationships, strengthening the social climate, and supporting mental well-being. Furthermore, maritime cadets are future officers who will work in a multicultural and stressful work environment, where interpersonal communication skills are a crucial competency (IMO, 2022).

However, research on the relationship between communication patterns and psychological well-being in maritime education in Indonesia remains very limited. Existing studies generally focus on the technical aspects of the curriculum or seafarer competency training, without delving into the psychosocial realm in depth.

The problem formulation in this research journal is as follows:

- How are the dynamics of communication patterns between maritime cadets and between cadets and teaching staff?
- How does this communication pattern affect the psychological well-being of cadets?

2. Research Methods

Study This use method approach qualitative descriptive with objective describe pattern communication and its impact to welfare psychological in a way in-depth. Research location is at the Polytechnic Cruise Malahayat, Aceh, during period from April to July 2025. Purposive sampling technique was used For selecting 25 cadets active from various level education and 5 staff teacher who have at least one experience year in foster cadets. Instruments data collection includes semi- structured interviews, observation participatory, and documentation. Data were analyzed use Miles and Huberman's techniques: data reduction, data presentation, and verification through triangulation and member checking for guard validity and reliability results.

3. Results and Discussion

This study reveals that effective communication patterns significantly influence

various aspects of the psychological well-being of maritime cadets. The findings were analyzed based on interviews, direct observations, and documentation at the Malahayati Maritime Polytechnic.

A. Dynamics of Communication Patterns between Cadets

The results of the study indicate that communication patterns among cadets at the Malahayati Maritime Polytechnic form complex dynamics and reflect the internal social structure of the maritime educational institution. Based on the results of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 10 cadets from various levels and regional backgrounds, it was found that interactions between cadets are divided into three main communication patterns, namely hierarchical, cooperative, and open communication.

Table 1. Frequency of Emergence of Communication Patterns between Cadets

Communication Patterns	Frequency Emergence	Main Context
Hierarchical	Tall	instruction, roll call, practice physique Simulation
Cooperative	Currently	exercises, assignments group Discussion
Open	Low	forums, informal sessions

Source: Research Data

The research results show that hierarchical communication remains the most dominant pattern in cadets' daily interactions. This pattern is characterized by a one-way communication flow from senior to junior cadets based on an internal ranking structure, so that instructions emphasize obedience over dialogue. This condition limits the space for junior cadets to provide feedback and express their views. This finding aligns with research by Tourish (2013), which asserts that vertical communication in authoritarian organizations tends to suppress subordinate participation and create psychological distance. A study by Kark and Shamir (2002) also showed that rigid hierarchical leadership can reduce members'

sense of autonomy and psychological involvement.

On the other hand, cooperative communication patterns begin to emerge in collaborative situations, such as during fieldwork or completing group assignments. In this context, hierarchical boundaries become more fluid, and cadets interact more equally to achieve common goals. More open dialogue, role flexibility, and a spirit of collegiality are key characteristics of this communication. These findings support the research of Salas, Sims, and Burke (2005), which emphasized that cooperative team communication plays a crucial role in improving coordination and group performance effectiveness, as well as strengthening social cohesion. Similarly, Edmondson (1999) found that teamwork supported by collaborative communication fosters a sense of psychological safety and member engagement.

Open communication, on the other hand, is found at the lowest intensity and generally occurs in informal situations, such as counseling sessions, religious activities, or break times. In these spaces, cadets feel freer to express their thoughts, feelings, and complaints without fear of sanctions or hierarchical judgment. This pattern aligns with the concept of psychological well-being. Safety, as proposed by Edmondson (2018), suggests that an environment that allows individuals to speak honestly without fear of negative consequences promotes learning and psychological well-being. Furthermore, Detert and Burris (2007) emphasize that open communication provides opportunities for organizational members to voice ideas and issues that contribute to system improvement.

Overall, these findings indicate that the communication system between cadets remains heavily influenced by a militaristic culture that emphasizes discipline and obedience through a strong hierarchical structure. However, the emergence of cooperative and open communication, while still limited, signals a potential shift toward more egalitarian and supportive communication patterns. This aligns with Schein's (2010) view that organizational cultural transformation can occur when the values of collaboration and openness begin to be internalized in daily practice, thus opening up opportunities for a healthier and more inclusive communication climate.

When linked to interpersonal communication theory (Adler & Towne, 2013), communication between cadets remains at the ritual and instructional stage, not yet reaching the

transactional stage that allows for an open and equal exchange of meaning. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for institutions to develop a communication climate that not only supports discipline but also facilitates the balanced psychological and social growth of cadets.

Furthermore, open communication has the potential to be key to preventing the accumulation of psychological stress resulting from intense academic and practical workloads. Therefore, the dynamics of communication among cadets must be understood not merely as a social practice, but also as a crucial determinant in shaping their psychological well-being and professional readiness as prospective sailors.

B. Impact on Psychological Well-being

The psychological well-being of maritime cadets is significantly influenced by the communication patterns that occur in their dormitory life. Based on in-depth interviews with 10 cadets and observations during academic and non-academic activities, it was found that open, empathetic, and supportive communication significantly contributes to reducing stress levels, increasing learning motivation, and strengthening social relationships between individuals.

The following data shows cadets' perceptions of the impact of open communication on aspects of psychological well-being:

Table 2. Student Responses to Open Communication

No	Aspect	Percentage Positive
1	Improvement support social	90%
2	Stress Reduction	85%
3	Improvement Motivation Study	82%
4	Satisfaction Academic	80%
5	Decrease level Anxiety	78%

Source: Research Data

The results of this study indicate that cadets who have the opportunity to participate in two-way and inclusive communication patterns tend to have more stable psychological conditions and a more positive attitude in living academic life. Open communication provides space for cadets to express emotions, receive constructive feedback, and build a sense of social connectedness with peers and instructors. This finding is in line with the study of Reeve, J. (2012) which found that dialogic communication in educational

environments contributes significantly to psychological well-being and a sense of belonging for students. In addition, research by Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2017) shows that open communication strengthens interpersonal relationships and increases students' emotional satisfaction.

Conversely, closed and authoritarian communication patterns, which emphasize one-way instructions without room for dialogue, have the potential to increase emotional distress. In these conditions, individuals are more susceptible to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and loss of motivation to learn. This is consistent with Vansteenkiste's findings. et al. (2020) emphasized that a controlling communication style can hinder the fulfillment of basic psychological needs and negatively impact students' well-being and intrinsic motivation. Similar findings were also reported by Howard, Bureau, Guay, Chong, and Ryan (2021), who showed that autonomy-suppressing learning environments correlate with increased stress and emotional exhaustion.

Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the view that empathy in communication plays an important role as an affective regulation mechanism in high-pressure educational contexts. This is supported by the study by Bakker and de Vries (2021) found that empathetic communication from instructors contributed to reduced burnout and increased student emotional engagement. Similarly, Schaufeli (2021) emphasized that a supportive relational climate is a protective factor against psychological exhaustion in demanding work and learning environments.

Implicitly, this finding confirms the urgency of implementing a student-centered approach. Communication, where students' emotional, psychological, and social needs are placed as an integral part of the educational process. When students feel heard, understood, and valued, they demonstrate greater resilience in the face of academic and environmental pressures. This aligns with the results of a meta-analysis by Klemola, Heikinaho-Johansson, and Väänänen (2022), which concluded that student-centered instructor communication is positively correlated with resilience, engagement, and learning well-being.

The practical implications of these findings emphasize the importance of maritime educational institutions developing responsive, open, and supportive internal communication systems, for example by providing regular dialogue forums and

integrating mental health coaching programs with competent communication facilitators. This recommendation is reinforced by research by Oades, Robinson, Green, and Spence (2021), which shows that supportive communication-based interventions in educational institutions can improve students' psychological well-being and adaptive capacity.

C. The Role of Teaching Staff in Effective Communication

Teaching staff play a key role in shaping communication patterns that support the psychological well-being of cadets. Based on in-depth interviews with five senior instructors and observations in the academic environment, it was found that the communication approach used by teaching staff significantly influences the emotional atmosphere and motivation of cadets during the learning process.

There are three main communication strategies that are consistently applied by instructors that are considered effective by cadets:

Table 3. Teacher Communication Strategies and Their Effects

Communication Strategy	Description Practice	Impact to Cadets
Bait back	Delivery evaluation in a way direct However with constructive language	Increase trust self and understanding to task
Constructive	Putting forward empathy , recognition to emotion cadets , as well as understanding to background behind individual	Lower pressure emotional and build a sense of connectedness
Approach Humanistic	Invite cadets For convey opinion in discussion class or session reflective	Push communication on two direction and courage put forward ideas
Involvement in the Discussion Forum		

Source: Research Data

The results of the study indicate that the application of communication based on empathy and dialogue significantly reduces the psychological distance between instructors and cadets. When instructors demonstrate an attitude of acceptance, respect, and openness, cadets feel treated as whole individuals, not just students, allowing open communication to develop naturally. This finding aligns with a study by Hagenauer and Volet (2021), which emphasized that warm and supportive pedagogical relationships strengthen emotional closeness and increase student engagement. Similarly, Derakhshan, Coombe, Zhaleh, and Tabatabaeian (2020) found that instructor empathy and dialogic presence significantly contribute to the quality of interactions and a positive classroom climate.

The cadets' experiences also demonstrate that instructors who employ reflective and supportive communication act as mentors who not only transfer knowledge but also facilitate psychological growth. In this context, instructors become meaningful figures who influence the formation of cadets' identity and emotional balance. This is consistent with the findings of Lavy and Naama-Ghanayim (2020), who asserted that teacher social-emotional competence is strongly correlated with students' emotional well-being and personal development. Furthermore, Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) emphasized that reflective instructor communication can create educational relationships that support motivation and learning resilience.

Furthermore, active staff involvement in discussion forums, mentoring, and informal counseling creates a safe space for cadets to express their feelings and gain social support. In this situation, communication is no longer limited to delivering instructions but transforms into a means of character development and mental resilience. This finding is supported by research by Sutela, Olin, and Syrjälä (2020), which shows that informal interactions between instructors and students play a crucial role in building trust and emotional support in higher education settings.

However, this study also revealed that a positive communicative approach has not been implemented evenly. Some instructors still maintain an authoritarian communication style rooted in a tradition of strict discipline, potentially hindering cadet openness and participation. This condition aligns with the findings of Hadar, Ergas, Alpert, and Ariav (2020), who highlighted that a rigid and control-oriented teaching culture can

hinder pedagogical innovation and responsiveness to students' psychosocial needs.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of teaching staff through professional development programs that emphasize empathetic communication skills, providing constructive feedback, and managing power relations in the classroom. This recommendation aligns with research by Postareff, Lindblom-Ylännne, and Nevgi (2022), which shows that continuous pedagogical training can enhance student-centered teaching approaches and support learning well-being. This strategy is relevant to the demands of modern maritime education, which emphasizes not only technical competence but also the emotional and social resilience of cadets.

D. Challenges in Implementing Effective Communication

Although research findings indicate a shift toward more open and cooperative communication patterns, this process has not been without obstacles. Based on data triangulation from interviews, observations, and documentation, several structural and cultural challenges hinder the implementation of effective communication within the Malahayati Maritime Polytechnic.

The research results identified three main challenges in implementing effective communication in maritime education environments.

First, cultural and language barriers arise from the diverse backgrounds of cadets, which bring with them differences in dialects, cultural expressions, and communication styles. This often leads to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and even potential conflict between individuals. This finding aligns with *Stahl's* research . *et al.* (2021) showed that cultural diversity within a team can enrich perspectives, but also increase the risk of communication friction if not accompanied by cross-cultural sensitivity. A similar point was emphasized by *Kim* (2020), who emphasized that *intercultural communication competence is key to adaptation and effective interactions in multicultural environments*.

Second, the dominance of a culture of seniority and the fear of expressing opinions are serious barriers to open communication. Hierarchical structures encourage junior cadets to refrain from expressing ideas, criticisms, or complaints due to fear of social and formal consequences. This situation aligns with *Morrison's* (2020) study, which revealed that in organizations with strong

hierarchies, individuals tend to choose silence over speaking up, even though this negatively impacts well-being and system improvement. Furthermore, *Li, Chen, and Blader* (2022) found that high power distance weakens individuals' courage to express their views, thereby intensifying feelings of psychological pressure and helplessness.

Third, the rigidity of official communication and the lack of space for dialogue still dominate both formal academic and non-academic activities. One-way, instructional communication patterns, such as during roll calls, physical training, and official announcements, do not provide space for reflection and open discussion. As a result, cadets' emotional and social problems often go undetected early. This situation reinforces *Howe's findings*. *and Abedin* (2020) found that the absence of dialogue in educational practices hinders the development of critical thinking, active participation, and emotional engagement in students. Meanwhile, *Wentzel, Russell, and Baker* (2020) emphasized that communicative support and opportunities for dialogue with instructors play a crucial role in maintaining students' psychological well-being and social adjustment.

Critically, these three challenges reflect a gap between the ideal of dialogic communication that supports psychological well-being and the structural and cultural realities that remain hierarchical. If not addressed systematically, this situation has the potential to hinder the creation of a mentally and emotionally healthy educational climate. Therefore, maritime educational institutions need to formulate comprehensive intervention strategies, such as cross-cultural communication training, strengthening a safe climate for expressing opinions, and establishing regular dialogue forums between cadets and instructors, to encourage a transformation toward a more participatory and supportive communication culture.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that several matter following:

First, the hierarchical communication pattern is still dominant, but is starting to shift towards a cooperative one.

Second, open and empathetic communication has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of cadets.

Third, teaching staff have a strategic role in creating a healthy communication climate.

Through constructive feedback, a humanistic approach, and involving students in discussions, instructors are able to reduce psychological distance and encourage openness.

Fourth, the application of effective communication faces structural and cultural challenges. Diversity of cultural backgrounds, strong seniority culture, and minimal space for formal dialogue hinder the realization of dialogic communication.

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