

Strengthening Students' Human Resource Competencies Through Soft Skills and Personal Branding Training at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung

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Abstract

Purpose: This community service activity aims to enhance students' human resource competencies through soft skills and personal branding training at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung.

Research Methodology: The methods used in this activity included lectures, interactive discussions, and practical sessions related to effective communication, self-confidence, and strategies for building a positive self-image in the digital era. The participants were high school students who required self-development in non-academic aspects.

Results: The results indicate an improvement in students' understanding and awareness of the importance of soft skills and personal branding as essential competencies in facing global competition. Furthermore, students demonstrated increased ability to express ideas and build their personal image with greater confidence.

Conclusions: This activity successfully strengthened students' competencies in soft skills and personal branding, which are important for academic and career readiness in the future.

Limitations: This activity was limited to students at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung, and was conducted within a relatively short training period, which may affect the long-term measurement of its impact.

Contributions: This activity is expected to contribute to the early development of high-quality human resources, particularly within the secondary education environment.

Keywords: *Human Resources; Soft Skills; Personal Branding; Self-Development; High School Students; Community Service*

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1. Introduction

The development of human resource (HR) quality is one of the key factors in facing the challenges of globalization and increasingly competitive competition. In the context of education, efforts to improve the quality of human resources are not only focused on cognitive or academic aspects, but also include strengthening non-academic competencies such as soft skills and the ability to build personal branding. These two aspects are important because they play a role in shaping character, increasing self-confidence, and supporting individual readiness to enter higher education and the workforce.

Current phenomena show that many high school students still have limitations in communication skills, self-confidence, and understanding the importance of self-image in the digital era. In fact, the development of information technology and social media has changed the way individuals build their identities and interact within society. Without adequate understanding, students may not optimally utilize existing opportunities to develop their potential and competitiveness.

SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, as one of the secondary education institutions, has a strategic role in shaping a superior and competitive younger generation. However, based on initial observations, systematic efforts are still needed to increase students' awareness and skills in the areas of soft skills and personal branding. Therefore, a structured and practical community service program is needed to address these needs.

This community service activity was designed in the form of training that integrates materials on effective communication, self-confidence development, and strategies for building positive personal branding, particularly through the use of digital media. The approach used was participatory, actively involving students through discussions and hands-on practice so that the material delivered could be understood and applied in real situations.

The purpose of this activity is to improve students' understanding and skills in developing soft skills and building positive personal branding as part of efforts to strengthen the quality of human resources from an early stage. In addition, this activity is also expected to make a tangible contribution in supporting the school's role in producing graduates who are not only academically excellent but also prepared to face future challenges.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development

2.1 Literature Review

Human resource development is an important aspect in improving the quality and competitiveness of individuals in the era of globalization. In the educational context, the development of students' competencies should not only focus on academic achievement but also on non-academic competencies such as soft skills and personal branding. These competencies are increasingly recognized as essential factors in supporting students' readiness to face higher education and the workforce.

Soft skills refer to interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities that support individuals in interacting effectively with others, solving problems, and adapting to various environments. According to Rahman, soft skills have a significant influence on students' work readiness because they contribute to communication abilities, teamwork, leadership, and self-confidence (Rahman, 2020). Therefore, strengthening soft skills through educational and training activities is necessary to prepare students for future challenges.

In addition to soft skills, personal branding also plays an important role in shaping students' self-image and confidence. Personal branding can be defined as an individual's effort to build a positive perception of themselves through attitudes, communication, and behavior, both directly and through digital media. Sari explained that personal branding contributes to increasing students' self-confidence because it helps individuals recognize their strengths and communicate them effectively to others (Sari, 2021). In the digital era, personal branding has become increasingly important as social media platforms provide opportunities for individuals to present their identities publicly.

Furthermore, the integration of soft skills and personal branding is considered capable of improving individual competitiveness and career readiness. Research conducted by Pratama and Wibowo showed that soft skills and personal branding simultaneously have a positive effect on work readiness (Pratama & Wibowo, 2022). This finding indicates that individuals with strong communication abilities, confidence, and positive self-image tend to be better prepared to face professional and social challenges. Based on the literature above, it can be understood that strengthening soft skills and personal branding is an important strategy in developing the quality of students' human resources. Therefore, training activities that focus on these aspects are expected to improve students' competencies, confidence, and readiness in facing future challenges.

2.2 Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical review and previous studies, this study develops the following hypotheses:

H1: Soft skills training has a positive effect on improving students' competencies.

H2: Personal branding training has a positive effect on increasing students' self-confidence.

H3: The integration of soft skills and personal branding training positively contributes to strengthening students' readiness to face future academic and professional challenges.

3. Methodology

This community service activity was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung, targeting high school students as the primary participants. The implementation method was systematically designed by adopting a participatory-educative approach, which positioned participants as active subjects in the learning process. This approach was chosen to enhance the effectiveness of knowledge transfer while encouraging participants' practical abilities in internalizing the provided materials. In the initial stage, preparatory activities were carried out, including coordination with the school authorities, identification of participants' needs, and the preparation of training materials relevant to the development of soft skills and personal branding competencies.

The implementation stage was carried out through the integration of several learning methods, namely expository material delivery, interactive discussions, and practice-based simulations. The expository method was used to provide a conceptual foundation regarding the importance of soft skills, interpersonal communication, self-confidence, and strategies for developing personal branding in the digital era. Furthermore, interactive discussions were facilitated to encourage participants' active involvement in expressing their views, experiences, and challenges encountered in self-development. To strengthen conceptual understanding, the activities continued with simulations and hands-on practice, enabling participants to apply communication skills and build self-image in contextual situations.

The evaluation of the activity was conducted comprehensively using pre-test and post-test instruments to quantitatively measure the improvement in participants' understanding. In addition, participatory observation was carried out to assess the level of engagement and participants' responses during the activity, while questionnaires were distributed to obtain feedback regarding the effectiveness of the program implementation. The indicators of success were determined based on improvements in conceptual understanding, changes in attitudes, and participants' abilities to apply the acquired skills. Therefore, this implementation method is expected to generate impacts that are not only cognitive, but also affective and psychomotor, in order to sustainably strengthen the quality of students' human resources.

4. Results and Discussions

The implementation of this community service activity at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung, demonstrated positive outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of the participants. Based on the evaluation results using pre-test and post-test instruments, there was a significant improvement in students' understanding of the concepts of soft skills and personal branding. Prior to the activity, most participants did not possess a comprehensive understanding of the importance of non-academic skills in supporting career readiness. However, after participating in the series of training sessions, students showed increased ability to identify, understand, and apply these concepts in their daily lives.

In addition, observations during the activity revealed an increase in students' active participation, particularly during interactive discussion sessions and hands-on practice. Students who were initially passive began to demonstrate confidence in expressing opinions, asking questions, and conducting communication simulations in front of the group. This indicates an improvement in self-confidence as one of the main components of soft skills. These findings are consistent with human resource development theory, which emphasizes that experiential learning can enhance engagement and the effectiveness of the competency internalization process.

In terms of personal branding, students demonstrated a better understanding of the importance of building a positive self-image, both directly and through digital media. The practical sessions showed that most participants were able to develop and present simple personal branding strategies, such as introducing themselves professionally, identifying their personal strengths, and understanding ethics

in the use of social media. This improvement indicates that the training intervention provided a tangible impact on students' ability to strategically manage their self-identity. Feedback collected through questionnaires also indicated highly positive responses from participants regarding the implementation of the activity. The majority of students stated that the materials presented were relevant to their needs and easy to understand because they were accompanied by direct practice. This finding demonstrates that the participatory-educative approach used in this activity was effective in improving both students' understanding and practical skills. Overall, the results of this activity confirm that strengthening soft skills and personal branding is an important aspect of developing the quality of human resources from an early stage. These findings reinforce the perspective that education should not only focus on academic achievement, but also on character building and individual readiness to face global challenges. Therefore, similar activities should be carried out continuously and integrated into student development programs at schools in order to produce graduates who are not only academically competent, but also excel in personality and professionalism.



Figure 1. Activity Implementation

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

The community service activity conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung, demonstrated that soft skills and personal branding training was effective in improving students' competencies. This was indicated by increased understanding, self-confidence, and students' ability to apply personal branding concepts. The participatory-educative approach used in this activity also proved effective in encouraging active participant involvement and generating positive impacts in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

5.2. Research Limitations

This activity was limited to students at SMA Negeri 1 Sekampung Udik, Bandar Lampung, and was conducted within a relatively short implementation period. Therefore, the long-term impact of the training on students' behavioral and competency development could not be comprehensively measured. In addition, the evaluation was primarily focused on participants' immediate responses and understanding after the training activities.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Schools are expected to integrate soft skills and personal branding training continuously into student development programs. In addition, similar activities should be conducted periodically with broader and more in-depth materials. Future community service programs and research are recommended to apply more measurable evaluation methods and expand collaboration with various stakeholders in order to enhance the sustainability and impact of the program.

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