

POLITENESS STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE ALPHA GENERATION IN TPQ MUJAHIDIN MOJOKERTO

STRATEGI KESOPANAN YANG DIGUNAKAN OLEH GENERASI ALPHA
DI TPQ MUJAHIDIN MOJOKERTO

Lukman Fahmi¹, Amiatun Nuryana²

¹UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia,
Jalan Ahmad Yani No.117, Jemur Wonosari, Wonocolo, Surabaya, Jawa Timur
lukman.fahmi@uinsby.ac.id

²Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Widya Darma
Jalan Ketintang No.147-151, Wonokromo, Wonokromo, Surabaya, Jawa Timur
amiatun.22003@mhs.unesa.ac.id

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Abstract

This study explores the social communication patterns of the Alpha generation, a cohort that has grown up immersed in digital environments and influenced by the people around them. The research examines the forms of social communication exhibited by this generation and the factors that shape them, utilizing the frameworks of Brown & Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (2011). Aiming to improve the Alpha generation's social communication, the study applies behavior modification strategies, including reward-and-punishment systems and token economy techniques. Conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, the findings reveal various forms of social communication, categorized into politeness and impoliteness. Influencing factors include parental upbringing, peer interactions, social media exposure, self-perception, and external influences. Implementing behavior modification techniques demonstrates measurable changes, fostering positive behavior development and reducing negative behaviors.

Keywords: *Alpha generation; Social communication; Behavior modification; Politeness and impoliteness; Parental upbringing*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pola komunikasi sosial Generasi Alpha, kelompok generasi yang tumbuh dalam lingkungan digital dan dipengaruhi oleh orang-orang di sekitar mereka. Penelitian ini mengkaji bentuk-bentuk komunikasi sosial yang ditunjukkan oleh generasi ini serta faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya, dengan menggunakan kerangka teori Brown & Levinson (1987) dan Culpeper (2011). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan komunikasi sosial Generasi Alpha melalui penerapan strategi modifikasi perilaku, termasuk sistem reward and punishment serta teknik ekonomi token. Dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, temuan penelitian ini mengungkap berbagai bentuk komunikasi sosial yang dikategorikan ke dalam kesantunan (politeness) dan ketidaksantunan (impoliteness). Faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi meliputi pola asuh orang tua, interaksi dengan teman sebaya, paparan media sosial, persepsi diri, dan pengaruh eksternal. Penerapan teknik modifikasi perilaku menunjukkan perubahan yang signifikan, mendorong pengembangan perilaku positif dan mengurangi perilaku negatif.

Kata kunci: *Generasi Alpha; Komunikasi sosial; Modifikasi perilaku; Kesantunan dan ketidaksantunan; Pola asuh orang tua*

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted social connections, particularly given the rising reliance on internet activities. Despite the good effects, increased internet usage during the epidemic has been linked to various harmful outcomes. This scenario has significantly impacted Generation Alpha, including people born after 2011 (Ramadlani & Wibisono, 2017). The accessibility of internet access provided by online platforms during the pandemic has aroused concerns among adults about the possibility of moral degradation in this younger generation.

Several reasons contribute to the moral concerns that adults have regarding Generation Alpha. One key component is the impact of their social environment, which includes the features and actions of those with whom they interact regularly (Resmiwati, 2010). These elements are thought to play a role in encouraging aberrant behavior in Generation Alpha, manifesting in the family environment and their interactions with the larger community (Lestari, 2012).

The deviant behavior of the Alpha generation has resulted in a significant social communication issue, particularly in East Java. The Governor of East Java, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, voiced worry over the increasing number of instances affecting children and adolescents in the province. She attributed the problem to two major factors: the family environment and the social environment, which includes social media (Nurhartanto, 2019). These elements significantly influence the Alpha generation's thinking, conduct, lifestyle, and development.

Concrete evidence supporting this worry comes from *satujurnal.com* (2014), which

revealed that internet abuse accounted for 90% of juvenile delinquency cases treated by Guidance and Counseling in Mojokerto Regency. These activities include access to pornographic content and internet gaming addiction, which frequently causes children to miss school.

Social communication is an important communication function that influences self-concept, self-actualization, and survival. Social communication is classified into two types: direct communication, which includes both verbal and nonverbal exchanges, and indirect communication, which also includes verbal and nonverbal features (Santosa et al., 2006). In everyday life, people employ a variety of ways to communicate effectively. The strategies include politeness and impoliteness approaches, which can be utilized to express or imply intent and meaning (Zahar, 2012). Brown & Levinson (1987) theory categorizes politeness methods into four categories: plain on-record (direct communication), positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (indirect speech). Furthermore, Culpeper's (2011) theory distinguishes five impoliteness strategies: naked on-record impoliteness, positive, negative, sarcastic, or fake politeness, and withholding politeness.

Behavioral transformation is also a significant consideration when solving social communication issues in the Alpha generation. Behavior modification is a technique for modifying an individual's behavior to encourage adaptive conduct while eliminating maladaptive behavior. This strategy focuses on observable behavior and consistently creates certain behavioral changes. According to Martin & Pear (2015), conduct can be divided into two categories: excessive behavior, which must be minimized, and deficiency behavior, which must be

raised. Fading, token economies, and shaping are some approaches to sustain and boost motivation.

This study differs from earlier research, such as Martinloi et al.'s (2021) investigation of social communication patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic and Fadlurrohman et al. (2019) analysis of the growth of the Alpha generation in the context of Industry 4.0. Furthermore, the study is based on the findings of Munawaroh and Kurniawan (2018), who investigated the features of the Alpha generation in comparison to prior generations. This study focuses on rehabilitating social communication in the Alpha generation afflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, using a case study from TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency.

This study uses Brown & Levinson (1987) politeness strategy theory and Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness theory to investigate the social communication patterns of the Alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin. Behavior modification is used to restore positive social communication in the Alpha generation and address the issue of social communication. This strategy seeks to promote positive conduct and practical communication skills in children.

This research focuses on the formulation of the following problem:

1. How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect the social communication of the Alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency, based on politeness and impoliteness strategies?
2. What factors shape the social communication patterns of the Alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What efforts and results were obtained from applying behavior modification

theory to restore social communication of the Alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Research Method

2.1 Research Setting and Design

This research aims to explore the social communication challenges faced by the alpha generation, particularly students at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo, Mojokerto. The findings of this study are based on data collected through direct observations, interviews with the research participants, and the results of applying therapy to these students using behavior modification techniques, as well as reward and punishment strategies and economic tokens. This research follows a qualitative descriptive design by Sugiyono (2013) to gather, categorize, and analyze data on the restoration of social communication skills among the alpha generation, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic at TPQ Mujahidin in Kutorejo, Mojokerto. The data is then described and explained in a comprehensive narrative. This study adopts a case study approach (Sukmadinata, 2011), focusing on TPQ students from the alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin in Kutorejo, Mojokerto.

2.1.1 Participants

This study involved alpha generation students, Ustadz/Ustadzah, and the students' parents from TPQ Mujahidin Kutorejo in Mojokerto. Participants were selected through direct observation and interviews from alpha generation students, Ustadz/Ustadzah, and parents to represent the broader population of students, teachers, and parents at TPQ Mujahidin.

2.1.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This study's data collection and analysis process was conducted in three phases: 1)

pre-restoration, 2) restoration, and 3) post-restoration. To address the first and second research questions, the pre-restoration phase involved observation and interviews. During the restoration phase, additional observations were made to examine the implementation of behavior modification with the alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin, and TPQ educators and parents were provided guidance. Lastly, in the post-restoration phase, data was analyzed to answer the first, second, and third research questions, organized into tables, and reports were written to conclude.

3. Results

The data analysis, based on observations of TPQ Mujahidin students and interviews with educators and parents, aimed to identify the forms of politeness and impoliteness among the students and the factors contributing to these behaviors. Additionally, the analysis evaluated the outcomes of implementing behavior modification techniques, such as the token economy and reward and punishment strategies, presented using a before-and-after comparison.

3.1 Social Communication Forms

The researchers assessed the various forms of social communication employed by students at TPQ. They categorized all the collected data into two main groups: communication utilizing politeness strategies and communication involving impoliteness strategies.

3.1.1 Politeness Strategy

The forms of social communication used by TPQ Mujahidin students who employed the researchers' politeness strategies were further analyzed to identify the specific types or techniques of politeness applied. The researchers applied Brown & Levinson (1987) politeness theory, which includes speaking

directly (bald on record), familiarity (positive politeness), formality (negative politeness), and indirect or vague politeness (off record).

The types of social communication observed in the alpha generation children at TPQ Mujahidin using politeness strategies include direct/non-ceremonious speech (bald on record), positive politeness/familiarity (positive politeness), and negative politeness/formality. The most frequently observed politeness technique was positive politeness, with 11 instances of positive politeness utterances made by the children over three consecutive days of observation. Negative politeness techniques were found in second place, with two utterances observed. Two instances of direct speech (bald on record) were also noted. However, indirect or vague politeness techniques were not observed in the children's social communication at TPQ Mujahidin.

The data analysis results show that the positive form of politeness observed in the social communication at TPQ Mujahidin suggests that the teaching and learning activities in the TPQ environment still involve social interactions that incorporate politeness in communication.

3.1.2 Impoliteness Strategy

The types of impoliteness techniques (Culpeper, 2011) used by TPQ Mujahidin students included bald on-record impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness. The researchers found 13 instances of impolite utterances in the social communication of TPQ Mujahidin children. The most common impoliteness observed was negative, with seven occurrences identified over three days of observation. Additionally, direct impoliteness (bald on record), sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding po-

liteness appeared twice. Thus, among the five categories of impoliteness, according to Culpeper (2011), the researchers identified four forms of impolite communication. Notably, no positive impoliteness was found in the communication of TPQ Mujahidin children. Based on their observations, the researchers also provided examples of sentences and words that fall under impoliteness.

3.2 Social Communication Factors

The forms of social communication among TPQ Mujahidin children, categorized into politeness and impoliteness, and their respective types, as discussed in the second problem formulation, are influenced by several factors that lead students to use both polite and impolite communication. Interviews with educators and parents of TPQ Mujahidin students provided the researchers with valuable data and insights into the factors affecting social communication among the students.

3.2.1 Politeness Strategy

The data analysis shows that positive politeness strategies are the most commonly used by TPQ Mujahidin children, as evidenced by their various communication forms. The factors influencing the polite behavior of these children, such as responding appropriately in conversations, greeting teachers, avoiding rude or inappropriate language, not interrupting others while speaking, and using respectful language with both peers and teachers, are primarily due to the teaching and upbringing provided by their parents at home. Their daily environment, including interactions with teachers and peers, also plays a role.

The tendency to speak softly, a form of positive communication, is influenced by how others treat or speak to them. When

others speak gently, the children respond in kind with positive language.

The use of negative politeness/formality strategies, such as apologizing when they make a mistake, results from the children's self-awareness of their actions and their impact on others. Similarly, expressing gratitude when receiving something reflects the children's awareness and consideration for others.

The direct speech strategies observed, such as saying "excuse me," "sorry," "please," and "thank you," are shaped by the teachings of their parents and their environment, which includes teachers and friends.

In conclusion, the primary factor influencing the polite communication of TPQ Mujahidin children is their parents' upbringing and teachings, followed by environmental influences and, lastly, the children's self-awareness.

3.2.2 Impoliteness Strategy

Several factors contribute to the impolite forms of social communication observed in TPQ Mujahidin students. Understanding these factors is crucial for re-analyzing the issue and finding solutions to reduce impolite communication, which addresses the study's third research question. Identifying the underlying causes can also provide valuable information for future researchers and society. The interviews with educators and parents of TPQ Mujahidin students revealed the factors behind the disrespectful communication strategies used by the children. The researchers classified these findings in a table to facilitate understanding.

The study identified four types of impoliteness strategies TPQ Mujahidin students use in their communication. Negative impoliteness strategies were the most prevalent. The children's use of harsh language was primarily attributed to emotional reac-

tions, such as losing during games, and environmental influences, including peer groups and social media. Interrupting conversations with teachers or parents was linked to a poor environment or inadequate parental guidance in teaching respect for others. It could also be triggered by frustration with their parents at the time.

Additionally, negative impolite communication, such as rudeness, verbal bullying, and inappropriate remarks, was caused by a harmful environment, such as peer relationships or social media exposure. Lack of parental involvement due to work commitments also affected the children's behavior, as their morals and conduct were not given sufficient attention or direction.

The direct causes of impoliteness, such as yelling at parents or peers with harsh words, often resulted from how others treated the children. When children felt disturbed by others or could not manage their emotions, they resorted to harsh language. Other contributing factors included feelings of frustration, being bullied, disagreements, being ignored, or exposure to unfavorable local environmental factors.

3.3 Social Communication Restoration Efforts and Results

The efforts to implement corrective therapy measures (restoration) aimed at addressing negative social communication were carried out after observing and identifying the forms and factors influencing the social communication of alpha generation students at TPQ Mujahidin. These efforts also sought to maintain and improve positive student communication over four months, using behavior modification techniques such as reward and punishment and economic tokens. After completing these interventions, the researchers presented the restoration results in a Before-After table to compare the students' social communica-

tion behaviors before and after the intervention. Below is an explanation and description of all the efforts and outcomes involved in the behavior modification-based restoration of social communication.

3.3.1 Restoring Social Communication Through Reward and Punishment

Increasing students' motivation at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency, through behavior modification using reward and punishment techniques has proven beneficial for alpha generation students. The data analysis recap from the positive behavior modification sheets provided to TPQ Mujahidin students as a behavior diary over four months showed positive results. Nine criteria for positive behaviors can be achieved in a single day. Each time a TPQ Mujahidin student displays positive behavior, they earn an asterisk as a reward. Conversely, when students exhibit negative behavior, they must repeat the phrase "I Promise I Will Never Do It Again" fifteen times and recite "Astaghfirullahal'adzim" thirty-three times as punishment. The study involved a sample of ten students.

3.3.2 Restoring Social Communication Through Token Economy

Over four months, behavior modification aimed at improving social communication was implemented using the token economy technique with alpha generation students at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency. The token economy technique proved highly effective in motivating, encouraging, and guiding the 10 TPQ Mujahidin students to consistently engage in positive social communication behaviors with teachers, peers, parents, and others around them. The table below illustrates the most frequent positive communication behaviors, the number of token card purchases, and the rewards earned by the stu-

dents throughout the four months as a result of the application of the token economy technique.

3.3.3 Before and After Social Communication Restoration

The before-after analysis is the final evaluation of the entire research process on restoring social communication in the alpha generation, explicitly focusing on behavior modification applied to the students of TPQ Mujahidin in Kutorejo District, Mojokerto.

The results regarding politeness among the alpha generation at TPQ Mujahidin show notable improvements. Students who previously forgot to ask for permission or help now always remember to do so politely. Those who once failed to show appreciation now express gratitude through clapping and kind words. Students who are less focused on the teacher have become more attentive and engaged in class. Similarly, students who previously did not give proper attention to their friends are now more respectful and attentive. Children who once responded to greetings passively are now enthusiastic about greeting teachers. Students who had difficulty saying "thank you" now do so with a smile. Those who were overly eager to ask questions now do so more thoughtfully, considering the context and waiting for an opportunity. Students who previously needed prompting to apologize now do so voluntarily, acknowledging their mistakes. Lastly, students who previously disrupted others with signaling have learned to signal more quietly.

Overall, the restoration of social communication using behavior modification techniques, including rewards, punishments, and economic tokens, has maintained positive behaviors and enhanced and developed them further. This study can be successful as the students continue ex-

hibiting and improving their good behaviors.

The negative behaviors among TPQ Mujahidin children also showed significant changes. For example, students who once used threats have transformed into children who show affection using kind words. Those who previously ignored the teacher have started paying attention and valuing the teacher's input. Students who once used inappropriate names for teachers and friends now address them correctly. Those who were previously engaged in mocking, insulting, or criticizing peers have reduced these negative behaviors through the behavior modification process and have stopped this behavior entirely. Children who once interrupted the teacher's conversation now listen attentively to the teacher's words. Students who were sarcastic or insulting have eliminated mainly these behaviors, and those who used harsh words have significantly reduced their use of such language. Additionally, children who used to neglect to express gratitude now regularly say "thank you" in various situations. Lastly, students who previously did not respond to greetings now do so enthusiastically and with kind words, showing improved social communication skills.

4. Conclusion

The research demonstrated that the application of behavior modification therapy with reward and punishment techniques, as well as economic tokens, had a significant positive impact on maintaining and developing positive social communication while reducing and eliminating negative communication behaviors among the alpha generation students at TPQ Mujahidin in Kutorejo District, Mojokerto Regency. However, successful implementation requires a well-structured approach involving concepts from social communication, linguistics, and

religious guidance to support the achievement of the study's objectives.

The study identified politeness and impoliteness as forms of social communication among the alpha generation students at TPQ Mujahidin, Kutorejo District. Interestingly, no indirect/vague politeness strategies (off-record) were found, according to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Although impolite communication behaviors based on Culpeper's theory were observed, no positive impoliteness was found in the study.

The factors influencing the emergence of polite and impolite communication in these students include family teachings or education, the surrounding environment, the school environment, how others treat them, and their self-awareness.

The efforts to restore social communication in alpha generation children at TPQ Mujahidin included four months of behavior modification therapy using reward and punishment techniques along with economic tokens, which led to positive results. These changes were reflected in before-and-after behaviors regarding both impolite and polite communication. Using rewards, punishments, and economic tokens improved social communication among the children in their interactions with teachers, parents, peers, and others in the community.

To address the factors leading to impolite social communication among these students, practical measures such as consistently establishing boundaries in social interactions, managing social media usage, and educating parents on balancing their time with their children are essential. When students exhibit negative behavior, affirming their actions with reprimands and educational punishments while providing consistent rewards for positive social communication can be an effective way to

acknowledge and encourage positive behaviors.

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