



Public Speaking Training to Enhance Communication Skills and Self-Confidence Among Millennials in Kendari City

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ABSTRACT

Public speaking is a skill that develops individuals, impacts the surrounding world, and promotes one's career. Now, public speaking is practiced in various societies, regardless of the individual's position. For the millennial generation, whose lives are highly intertwined with technology in every aspect, such as learning, shopping, communication, and booking transportation, face-to-face interaction with the general public is limited. However, through mastering public speaking skills, millennials can enhance their social communication and boost their self-confidence. This training activity was conducted for millennials using the lecture, discussion, practical (role-playing), and mentoring methods. Lectures and discussions helped expand knowledge, while practical exercises (role-playing) trained and motivated the participants, enabling them to gain the courage and familiarity to address an audience. The training results showed that most of the presented material was understood by the participants. Most of the participants' questions served to reinforce or clarify the concepts discussed. Practical sessions ran smoothly; although the participants initially felt fearful or lacked confidence to stand before the group, this nervousness dissipated after subsequent opportunities to practice. Moreover, participants successfully explored their own potential, demonstrating organized and focused speech, clearer vocal delivery, and even the use of humor and engaging body language. All participants appeared more at ease but serious in demeanor. They expressed a hope for continued public speaking training, realizing that it was significantly beneficial for millennials, especially the university students, who are expected not only to excel in academics but also to possess excellent public speaking skills.

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A. INTRODUCTION

In the face of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, human resources are currently required to possess not only knowledge but also skills (Lazuardi et al., 2022; Agustinah et al., 2023; Marthalia, 2023). The skills developed, particularly among the younger generation, are based on academic and non-academic skills (generally referred to as "soft skills") (Pratiwi, 2020; Nopi Hidayat et al., 2022).



Agustinah et al., (2023) suggest that the professional landscape, shaped by the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and Industrial Revolution 4.0, requires a broader range of competencies. These include soft skills such as public speaking, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Public speaking skills are essential for conveying ideas, engaging in discussions, and reporting work results to others. These skills are vital when holding leadership positions (supervisor, manager, or director), as it allows one to lead meetings effectively, motivate subordinates, or successfully deliver speeches to the entire workforce (Cahyadi et al., 2022).

Public speaking is a crucial skill in both daily life and the workplace (Rukiati et al., 2024). Yet, many people are afraid to speak in public (Chumaeson, 2020). Since public speaking is a skill, it can be learned and honed through practice; the more one practices, the more skilled and confident one becomes (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023; Tarsinih & Juidah, 2021). One is not necessarily an organizational leader or a group chairperson to engage in public speaking. Regardless of one's role in society (mechanic, architect, doctor, secretary, communications consultant, accountant, politician, lecturer, staff member, or homemaker), possessing public speaking skills is essential (Izzah & Fatchurrohman, 2023).

Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) for 2022 shows that the working-age population in Indonesia is double the combined number of children and the elderly. This reveals that Indonesia possesses a demographic bonus between 2020 and 2030 that must be effectively leveraged to meet industrial demands in the era of Industry 4.0 (Wijaya, 2023). Naturally, to capitalize on this demographic bonus, one must possess strong soft skills, specifically in public speaking.

Millennials today have established new communication patterns centered on social media and the internet. These patterns are characterized by a preference for freedom of expression and open communication; a daily reliance on online media; creativity, innovation, productivity, and responsiveness; the maintenance of multiple social media accounts and a preference for Android smartphones; and a reliance on digital communication. They also value independence and flexibility, and seek a balance between challenges and expected outcomes (Nurdin & Labib, 2021). Conversely, there are limitations to face-to-face communication with their immediate surroundings. This has led to various negative behaviors, such as dishonesty during interactions (due, in part, to the invisibility inherent to virtual communication), which, in turn, sparks numerous conflicts (Zis et al., 2021).

Millennials in Kendari City exhibit these same communication patterns found elsewhere. They predominantly communicate using internet technology within the virtual realm. Consequently, they struggle to develop the ability to communicate effectively in person, let alone speak confidently in public. There is a tendency for individuals to experience a lack of confidence, heightened emotion, and fear or timidity when speaking formally (Saleh et al., 2024). However, communication and public speaking skills are essential across all aspects of life, personal and professional. To address this issue, it is crucial to provide training in direct communication (particularly public speaking), given that it is the younger generation that is considered a national asset, is expected to become skilled public speakers and is ready to enter the workforce and meet the challenges of a changing world (Fauji & Puspasari, 2019).

B. METHODS

The methods of this activity include lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and practical exercises or role-playing. The lecture method is used to enhance knowledge regarding the importance of understanding effective public speaking techniques and factors that influence them; these lectures are supplemented by presentations and face-to-face discussions with participants. Question-and-answer sessions are undertaken to gauge the extent of the participants' understanding of the material presented (Zulfiah et al., 2023). Furthermore, the activity proceeds into practical exercises in the form of role-playing, where the participants are granted time to demonstrate public speaking skills independently in front of the group. These exercises are aimed at boosting the participants' courage and self-confidence in public speaking. In this hands-on practice, participants are guided directly should they encounter any difficulties while practicing independently. At the conclusion of the activity, an evaluation is done via a question-and-answer session to gather information and participant feedback regarding their public speaking abilities.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This training activity was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, UHO, with 21 millennial students participating. The session began with a presentation by the organizing team, involving an introduction to public speaking and its vital role in daily life. The material was presented concisely and straightforwardly, using simple language to ensure quick comprehension by the participants (Husin et al., 2021). Additionally, the presentation used a projector and slides to help the participants understand the content. Opportunities for questions were provided throughout to address any points that were unclear. The presenters endeavored to build rapport with the participants via eye contact. The following image shows the atmosphere during the presentation.



Figure 1: Presentation on Public Speaking (Organizing Committee Chair)

The presentation initially gave a fundamental understanding of public speaking, followed by its three primary objectives (to inform, persuade, and entertain). The material then involved examples of public speakers. It was noted that not everyone is naturally capable of being a public speaker; public speaking is not an inherent trait, but a skill that must be learned and continuously practiced to achieve success in public performance. A person's greatest fear when engaged in public speaking is nervousness. If left unchecked, this "ailment" of nervousness can erode an individual's self-confidence (Girsang, 2018).

Following the presentation, with the assistance of the organizing team, participants practiced public speaking individually. First, participants voluntarily selected the topics they wished to present. They were encouraged to choose subjects they found interesting and felt confident conveying effectively to an audience. The practice presentations were designed to last between 5 and 7 minutes. Participants were then invited one-by-one to take the stage to practice. As no participants volunteered to step forward on their own initiative, the team arranged the speaking order based on the previously completed attendance list. The following section shows the participants' public speaking practice sessions.



Figure 2: Public speaking practice by training participants

During the public speaking practice session, participants began with the introduction of themselves to the group. At first, participants appeared nervous, evidenced by slightly trembling voices, restless body movements, and even times of silence caused by forgetting what they intended to say. Under the guidance and direction of the organizing team, participants attempted the simplest method to overcome this initial nervousness: taking slow, deep breaths over the course of several seconds. This is a fundamental breathing technique essential for various activities beyond public speaking, such as singing. Breathing from the abdomen helps to expand the lung cavity, thereby facilitating better oxygen flow (Girsang, 2018).

In the subsequent stage, participants practiced adopting correct body posture, hand placement, and foot placement. This included maintaining an alert, forward-facing posture (avoiding slouching) and keeping hands relaxed and positioned at abdominal level. Regarding the foot placement, men were instructed not to stand with their feet too close together, while women were advised to stagger their feet (placing one slightly ahead of the other) rather than keeping them parallel. These measures were intended to boost the speaker's confidence and create a positive impression on the audience. The following images show the body language of the public speaking training participants.



Figure 3: Participants practicing public speaking

In addition to body positioning, participants are guided to avoid remaining stationary and are encouraged to walk towards the audience. This is to demonstrate that the public speaker is approachable and does not create distance between themselves and the audience. Below is a view of a participant practicing moving closer to the audience.



Figure 4: Display of Public Speaking Participants' Practice Styles

Participants are also guided to adopt a creative and innovative approach to speaking, such as incorporating entertaining humor or jokes to enliven the atmosphere and boost the participants' enthusiasm. The following shows a participant practicing by using humor (Girsang, 2018).



Figure 5: Public speaking participants practicing humor.

Some participants were able to demonstrate a natural flair for entertaining and successfully kept the audience engaged and attentive throughout their presentations, without any sense of boredom.

At the conclusion of the event, the organizing team did an evaluation. The results revealed that public speaking training for millennials ran smoothly and successfully, meeting the planned schedule. Moreover, the participants showed great enthusiasm, maintaining focused attention on the speaker and asking questions. Most inquiries served to reinforce their understanding, and participants performed public speaking exercises effectively (though some needed to do it a second time to achieve the desired result).

The material covered the full spectrum of public speaking, from basic introductions to the specific steps involved in mastering the skill. Beyond acquiring knowledge, participants were encouraged to practice public speaking techniques by mirroring the speaker's movements. They also showed enthusiasm during the Q&A session. It was evident that the participants had grasped the material, as they easily answered questions from the organizing team regarding the content presented.

Participant feedback revealed a high level of satisfaction with the training. The material provided was valuable for broadening the participants' insights, knowledge, skills, and expertise. Some participants noted that they had previously been unaware of the necessary preparations for public speaking; the training helped them realize that preparation is a crucial factor in successfully achieving the objectives of a public speaking engagement. This aligns with the findings of Elenia et al. (2020), who identify practice as a primary factor in successful public speaking; this implies that becoming a proficient speaker is achieved through routine, diligent, and disciplined practice (Izzah & Fatchurrohman, 2023). Evaluation results regarding the material presented reveal that most of the participants grasped the meaning of public speaking, understood how it is



performed, and were able to distinguish it from ordinary conversation (57.1% demonstrated a high level of understanding, 33.4% understood well, and 0.95% had a sufficient level of understanding).

Furthermore, participants reported an increase in knowledge and skills, including training on clear vocal modulation. According to research by Fauji & Puspasari, (2019) vocal delivery determines whether the message is well-received by the audience; effective communication requires the minimization of interference ("noise"). This aligns with the views of Saeni et al., (2022), who state that a public speaker must be skilled in speaking clearly so that the intended message is understood by the audience. Participants were taught preparation and structuring of content, while gaining insight into the use of body language during public speaking. Specific aspects practiced during the session included smiling at the start, maintaining eye contact with the audience, body posture (such as walking mechanics), and hand gestures. Body language (nonverbal communication) supports verbal communication, ensuring the interaction is effective (Tarsinih & Juidah, 2021). Mastery of body language is essential in public speaking; it is considered a crucial element that makes the message engaging, easily digestible, and comprehensible to the audience (Prabowo, 2019).

Consequently, the organizing team believes that this public speaking training and practice session is beneficial for millennials, helping them build self-confidence and foster future growth. Participants expressed satisfaction with the material delivery and the instructors, conveying their gratitude for the training and hoping for future sessions, given the event's importance for personal development, regarding social interaction and communication with the broader community.

D. CONCLUSION

Public speaking training is crucial regarding the enhancement of millennials' ability to speak in public. Prior to the training, participants often felt shy, nervous, and insecure; they struggled with stuttering, uncertainty of what to say, and a lack of clarity in their delivery. They stated going blank or forget what they intended to say when facing an audience, which caused them to lose focus.

This training provided millennials with the knowledge, techniques, experience, and skills necessary for public speaking to support their daily activities. This aligns with the goals of National Education regarding mastery of the "4C" skills: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. As a result, millennials became more confident, motivated, and enthusiastic about public speaking. This can foster their success in both academic and organizational endeavors, enabling them to communicate their ideas effectively and inspire others to join them in carrying out positive activities.

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F. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Zulfiah Larisu (ZL) prepared the manuscript (initial draft), coordinated the site selection and data collection, and was directly involved in the activity implementation and interpretation of results. Sutiya Fachruddin (SF) contributed to the design of the



activity instrument, participated in the activity implementation, and assisted in interpreting the findings. Joko (JK) supported data documentation and instrument review; La Iba (LI) contributed to activity evaluation and participated in the manuscript editing. Muhammad Rajab (MR) contributed to the activity implementation and supported the manuscript revision and final editorial improvements.

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