Increasing the Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication through Understanding and Strengthening Self-Concept

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Abstract. This study aims to enhance the effectiveness of interpersonal communication through understanding and strengthening self-concept. Effective interpersonal communication is a crucial skill in human life, contributing to building meaningful relationships, fostering trust, and resolving conflicts. However, a weak self-concept often hinders effective communication, such as low self-esteem or social anxiety. This research highlights that a positive self-concept is key to boosting confidence, openness, and empathy, essential elements in social interactions. In increasingly complex cross-cultural communication, a strong self-concept is the foundation for adapting to diverse social backgrounds. The study emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance, feedback management, and motivation for personal growth as primary components in enhancing interpersonal communication skills. These findings provide insights into how individuals can build more harmonious and constructive relationships by managing a healthy self-concept effectively.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Self-Concept, Self-Acceptance, Emotional Management, Social Adaptation

1 Introduction

Interpersonal communication is an essential skill in human life that serves as a means to convey ideas, share emotions, and build meaningful relationships (Harapan et al., 2022). As social beings, humans cannot avoid interacting with other individuals in various life contexts, such as the family environment, the world of work, and wider social relationships (Mukarom, 2021). The quality of effective interpersonal communication has a significant role in determining the quality of interpersonal relationships and affecting productivity in various areas of life. Effective communication supports the formation of positive emotional connections, increases trust between individuals, and helps to overcome conflicts that arise (Fatraya et al., 2018; Harapan et al., 2022; Sitorus, 2020). However, achieving effective communication is not always easy, especially if the individual does not have a good understanding of himself. In this case, self-concept plays an important role as the foundation for healthy communication skills.

Self-concept is an individual's perception and evaluation of himself or herself which includes physical, emotional, and social aspects (Analitika, 2016a, 2016b; Syafrizaldi, 2018). A positive understanding of self-concept allows individuals to communicate with confidence, openness, and empathy. Conversely, negative self-concepts can be a major barrier to communication, causing individuals to feel anxious, inferior, or defensive when interacting with others. Weak self-concept can also hinder individuals from conveying messages clearly and consistently, thus causing misunderstandings and tension in interpersonal relationships [8], [9], [10]. This shows that understanding and strengthening self-concept not only helps individuals to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, but also contributes to creating more productive and harmonious communication.

The importance of self-concept in communication lies in its ability to build confidence, social skills, and the ability to adapt to the environment. Individuals with a positive self-concept tend to have the ability to face criticism openly and constructively without feeling threatened (Rahmawati & Restu, 2015; Sari & Maryatmi, 2019; Suhron, 2016). A positive response to criticism indicates emotional maturity as well as the ability to manage stress in social situations. This supports the formation of healthy and productive relationships because it creates an open and transparent dialogue. In contrast, individuals with fragile self-concepts often have difficulty expressing thoughts, avoiding social interactions, or even getting caught up in unnecessary conflicts. This condition can trigger a sense of social isolation and reinforce negative perceptions of oneself.

In interpersonal communication, self-concept affects various aspects of interaction, from how a person expresses their thoughts to how they respond to messages from others. A healthy self-concept helps individuals convey messages clearly, listen actively, and respond to social situations in a timely manner. High self-awareness allows individuals to recognize the influence of emotions on social interactions and control impulsive reactions that can muddy communication. Additionally, good self-acceptance helps individuals manage criticism and conflict effectively. Self-acceptance teaches individuals to understand that failure or mistakes in communication are natural and can be a learning experience. This confirms that self-concept has a fundamental role in improving the quality of interpersonal relationships and creating more inclusive and constructive communication.

In this modern era, where social interaction takes place in a multicultural and complex environment, self-concept is becoming an increasingly relevant aspect [5], [14], [15]. Globalization has encouraged individuals to communicate across cultures, which requires skills to understand and manage oneself before being able to understand others.

Cross-cultural communication requires sensitivity to differences in values, norms, and social customs. In this context, a strong self-concept becomes the foundation for individuals to adapt to dynamic situations and build mutually supportive social relationships without neglecting their self-identity. A healthy self-concept allows individuals to remain authentic while also being flexible in interacting with various social backgrounds.

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is also determined by the extent to which individuals are able to process the feedback they receive (Dilla et al., 2024; Hidayat, 2012). Feedback, both positive and negative, has a significant role in shaping and reinforcing an individual's self-concept. Positive feedback can strengthen self-confidence and motivate individuals to continue developing their communication skills. On the other hand, negative feedback can be a useful introspection tool if it is processed objectively. Individuals with a healthy self-concept are able to manage negative feedback without feeling down, but rather use it as a foothold to improve themselves.

In addition, complete self-acceptance also includes the ability to accept shortcomings as well as identify potential for self-development [18]. Individuals who are able to accept themselves as a whole will find it easier to establish honest and open communication without fear of negative judgment from others. Self-acceptance helps reduce defensive attitudes and open up a healthy space for dialogue. This builds trust which is an important basis in forming effective communication.

Motivation for self-change also plays a key role in the development of interpersonal communication skills. Individuals who have a strong drive to continue learning and developing will be more proactive in looking for ways to improve their communication skills [19], [20], [21]. They tend to be more open to new experiences and do not hesitate to accept challenges in social interactions. This encouragement not only strengthens self-concept, but also encourages individuals to adapt better in various communication situations.

Overall, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication is greatly influenced by understanding and strengthening self-concept. A positive self-concept creates confidence, openness, and the ability to empathize, all of which are essential elements in building harmonious social relationships. This article highlights the various aspects of self-concept that underlie communication effectiveness, including self-awareness, self-consistency, social perception, and self-acceptance. By understanding and managing these factors, individuals can improve their communication skills and build more meaningful and constructive relationships. In the context of increasingly complex and multicultural social interactions, strengthening self-concept is a very relevant aspect to create inclusive and dynamic communication.

The implications of this discussion are very relevant for individual self-development in a personal context. A deep understanding of self-concept not only helps a person recognize their strengths and weaknesses, but also equips individuals with the ability to build healthier and more meaningful relationships in daily life. By strengthening aspects such as self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-awareness, individuals can increase confidence in communication, manage conflicts more maturely, and create more empathetic and authentic interactions. Therefore, this research is expected to be a reference for everyone who wants to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships through the development of a positive self-concept.

2 Result and Discussion
2.1 Self-Image in Interpersonal Communication

Self-image is an individual's perception of himself, both physically, emotionally, and socially. This perception is formed from childhood and continues to develop along with life experiences, social interactions, and feedback from the surrounding environment. Factors such as parenting, school experience, and support from the social environment play an important role in shaping an individual's self-image.

When a person has a positive self-image, they tend to feel comfortable communicating. For example, an employee who feels competent in his field will be more confident in conveying ideas in a team meeting. They are able to articulate their thoughts clearly and are open to discussions or suggestions from colleagues. This condition has a positive impact on a collaborative and productive work atmosphere.

On the contrary, negative self-image is often an obstacle to communication. For example, a student who has had a bad experience in a previous presentation may feel anxious and hesitant to speak in front of the class, so the quality of his or her presentation decreases. This can affect academic performance and reinforce feelings of insecurity in the long run. In addition, in social relationships, a negative self-image can make a person avoid social situations because of fear of other people's judgment.

To improve a negative self-image, it is necessary to make an effort to identify the root cause of the view. Self-reflection therapy, such as writing down thoughts and feelings in a journal, can help individuals understand the source of their negative perceptions. Social support from family, friends, or the community also plays an important role in improving self-image. For example, positive encouragement from friends after successfully delivering a presentation can boost a person's confidence.

Additionally, communication skills training, such as public speaking training, can help a person build a healthier self-image. This training provides space for individuals to practice overcoming nervousness, understanding supportive body language, and learning to set voice intonation to be more convincing. For example, joining the Toastmasters program can help individuals practice speaking skills with a variety of techniques that support confidence.

Research by Khairani, Ahmad, and Marjohan [22] shows that students' self-image contributes 27.4% to their interpersonal communication skills. Students with positive self-image tend to be more confident in social interactions, while those with negative self-image show a tendency to avoid social interaction.

Building a positive self-image requires an ongoing process. Small steps such as celebrating daily achievements, practicing self-affirmation, and replacing negative mindsets with more realistic perspectives can be effective strategies. Thus, individuals who seek to develop a positive self-image will be more open to social interactions, have better communication skills, and be able to establish harmonious interpersonal relationships.

2.2 The Effect of Self-Esteem on the Quality of Interaction

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of personal value and self-worth. It shapes how a person perceives their ability to engage in meaningful social interactions. According to Rosenberg [23], self-esteem influences one's confidence, motivation, and openness in communication. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to express their thoughts clearly, accept criticism constructively, and maintain emotional stability during interpersonal interactions. Conversely, low self-esteem often results in self-doubt, defensiveness, or avoidance behaviors that hinder effective communication.

Self-esteem is another key factor in communication effectiveness. Self-esteem reflects how much a person values and accepts himself. Individuals with healthy self-esteem have confidence that they deserve to be listened to and respected.

Individuals with high self-esteem are usually more confident in expressing their opinions and are able to accept criticism constructively. They can see feedback as an opportunity to grow, not as a threat. For example, a leader who has healthy self-esteem can receive input from his subordinates without feeling threatened. They respond to criticism with an open and evaluative attitude thus building respect among team members.

In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem often feel doubtful or afraid of rejection, thus withdrawing from conversations or being defensive. They tend to interpret criticism as a personal attack, which can trigger conflict and worsen interpersonal relationships. For example, an employee who feels insecure may avoid team discussions for fear that his or her opinion will be considered wrong, limiting opportunities for improvement.

A study by Phillips, Smith, and Modaff [24] found that college students with low self-esteem experienced higher communication anxiety and lower class participation. This shows that self-esteem affects confidence in communication and the quality of interpersonal interactions.

Efforts to improve self-esteem can be made through the practice of positive thinking, setting realistic achievements, and managing expectations of yourself. For example, setting achievable daily goals and celebrating those achievements can help strengthen your self-confidence. In addition, developing a *growth mindset* can help individuals view failure as part of the learning process.

Managing criticism wisely is also an important step to creating productive interactions. Individuals can practice techniques such as active listening, asking clarifying questions, and avoiding impulsive responses to keep the discussion constructive. Thus, strengthening self-esteem will support healthy communication skills and encourage positive social relationships.

2.3 Ideal Self as a Driver of Communication Motivation

The ideal self is a picture of who a person wants to be based on his aspirations and values that he believes in. The ideal self serves as a guide that motivates individuals to achieve certain goals.

When individuals are able to align their self-concept with their ideal self, they will feel more motivated and confident in communicating. For example, a student who aspires to become a public speaker will try to practice his speaking skills and increase his public speaking experience.

Research by Bursalı & Öz [NO_PRINTED_FORM] [25] shows that self-image ideals in the context of second language learning (L2) increase motivation to communicate in that language. Students with a strong self-ideal image are more motivated to participate in L2 communication.

However, the mismatch between the self-concept and the ideal self can create internal tensions. An example is someone who aspires to be a leader, but feels that he lacks enough skills. This tension can lead to uncertainty or awkwardness when interacting with others. To reduce such mismatches, individuals need to establish concrete steps towards self-development, such as attending leadership training or asking for mentors.

2.4 Self-Awareness in Managing Emotions and Behaviors

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize their feelings, behaviors, and impacts on others. Good self-awareness allows a person to identify their emotional triggers and manage responses in a healthy manner, avoiding emotional outbursts that can damage interpersonal relationships.

A person with high self-awareness can recognize when they feel angry, anxious, or happy, and understand the cause of those feelings. With effective emotion management, individuals can adjust their communication style to be relevant to the situation and the person they are talking to. For example, a person who realizes that he or she is irritable to criticism can train himself to take a moment before responding. This helps them give a more constructive response and avoid impulsive reactions that can muddy the atmosphere.

Additionally, self-awareness helps individuals understand how their actions affect the perceptions of others. For example, a boss who realizes that a loud tone of voice can trigger fear in subordinates will try to adjust the intonation and gestures to make communication more effective and supportive of openness. Awareness of body language also plays an important role in improving the harmony of interactions.

Weger et al. [NO_PRINTED_FORM] [26] in a longitudinal study found that self-awareness training improves an individual's interpersonal skills and personal development capacity. High self-awareness helps individuals manage emotions and behaviors in social interactions.

Increasing self-awareness can be done through a variety of methods, such as daily reflection to evaluate experiences, meditation to calm the mind, and asking for honest feedback from trusted colleagues or family. For example, writing down feelings in a journal can help individuals process their emotions and find thought patterns that may need to be changed. With better self-awareness, a person can create more positive interactions, manage conflicts healthily, and strengthen the quality of their social relationships.

2.5 Self-Consistency as the Key to Trust

Self-consistency plays an important role in building trust and credibility. An individual who is consistent between his words and actions will be more trustworthy to others. For example, a manager who always keeps meeting promises on time will be considered to have high integrity by his team. They not only show commitment to duty but also show respect for other people's time. This creates a work culture full of mutual trust.

Conversely, inconsistencies, such as stating something but doing the opposite, can create confusion and damage professional relationships. For example, a teacher who demands discipline from students but is often late to class will lose the respect of his students. This kind of inconsistency makes individuals difficult to trust and potentially damages their credibility in the eyes of the social environment.

Goodman-Deane et al. (2016) found that couples with high communication consistency experienced more effective conflict resolution and higher relationship satisfaction. Consistency between words and actions builds trust in interpersonal relationships.

Maintaining self-consistency requires strong commitment and periodic evaluation to ensure that actions are in accordance with the values held. One way to maintain consistency is to take note of the goals and promises that have been made and conduct regular evaluations to review whether the behavior is in line with those commitments. Additionally, it's important to be honest with yourself and not hesitate to ask for feedback from others to know their perceptions.

With maintained self-consistency, individuals will find it easier to build trust and healthy relationships. When others see that their actions are consistent with their words, they will feel comfortable and confident in interacting, resulting in effective and productive communication.

2.6 Self-Perception in Social Context (Social Self-Perception)

Self-perception in a social context describes how a person feels that he or she is seen or judged by others [28] This perception is greatly influenced by social experiences, comments from others, and applicable social

standards. When a person feels accepted and valued in a social environment, they tend to be more active and confident in communicating.

Studies by Fazio et al. (1981) show that self-perception in social contexts is influenced by interactions with others and social media. Positive self-perception increases participation in social communication. Conversely, if a person feels belittled or unappreciated, they may become passive or even avoid interaction. Building a positive self-perception can be done by expanding supportive social experiences, such as joining communities that match your interests and participating in social activities that build a sense of connection.

2.7 The Importance of Feedback in Improving Self-Concept

Interpersonal interactions are greatly influenced by feedback from the environment. Positive feedback, such as appreciation and recognition, can reinforce a person's self-concept and encourage them to be more confident in communicating.

According to Gecas and Schwalbe [30], feedback from the social environment plays an important role in the formation of self-concept. Positive feedback reinforces positive self-concept, while negative feedback can hinder the development of interpersonal communication.

For example, a child who is praised for his success in the speech competition will be more confident the next time. This recognition can be a motivation for the child to continue to develop his speaking skills. Additionally, in the work environment, appreciation from superiors for the hard work of employees can increase confidence and engagement in the team.

However, not all feedback is positive. Unconstructive criticism can weaken confidence and create barriers in communication. Individuals who often receive negative criticism without suggestions for improvement can feel unappreciated, thus impacting their productivity and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is important for the feedback giver to convey criticism in a constructive way. For example, providing concrete and specific suggestions regarding areas of improvement and offering helpful support or solutions.

In addition to providing clear suggestions, the feedback giver also needs to pay attention to the tone of voice, body language, and the right moment. A criticism delivered with empathy and appreciation for one's efforts can encourage the recipient of the criticism to develop and adapt better.

On the recipient's side, openness to feedback and the ability to manage emotional responses are essential. Receiving feedback as input for growth can help individuals view it as an opportunity to learn. Thus, the communication process becomes more positive, and the recipient of feedback can develop a stronger self-concept and more harmonious interpersonal relationships.

2.8 Self-Acceptance as the Basis of Emotional Stability

Self-acceptance is the ability of an individual to accept his strengths and weaknesses. Individuals who are able to accept themselves tend to be more emotionally stable and able to face criticism with a cool head, because they understand that shortcomings are part of the normal process of self-development.

For example, a sports coach who is aware of his limitations in a particular strategy but remains open to learning will earn the respect of his team. They will show calmness in accepting feedback and take lessons from each defeat. In contrast, individuals who have difficulty accepting their own weaknesses tend to be irritable or defensive, which can damage the quality of interaction and create tension in social relationships.

Self-acceptance also encourages a person not to get caught up in feelings of guilt or shame for past mistakes. For example, an employee who has made a big mistake but is able to forgive himself or herself and learn from it will be easier to return to work with high productivity compared to those who constantly blame themselves.

Wang et al.(2021) found that self-acceptance was positively correlated with positive coping styles among psychiatric nurses. Self-acceptance helps individuals manage emotions and improve emotional stability in social interactions.

Self-acceptance exercises can be done by focusing on the positive things that have been achieved and appreciating the process of self-improvement. Techniques such as writing down appreciation for small accomplishments, avoiding unhealthy comparisons, and practicing positive affirmations every day can help increase self-acceptance. In addition, talking to a mentor or therapist can also provide a new perspective and help individuals understand that imperfections are natural. With good self-acceptance, individuals can create more honest and healthy communication and build more harmonious and empathetic relationships.

2.9 Self-Motivation for Growth

Motivation for self-change is a driving factor that encourages individuals to continue to develop their communication skills. This motivation encourages individuals to improve themselves and seek new opportunities to learn skills that can improve their communication effectiveness.

A person with high motivation will be more proactive in seeking experience and facing challenges with a positive attitude. For example, a professional who wants to improve his or her negotiation skills may take persuasive communication courses, read relevant literature, and practice new techniques at every opportunity. Additionally, strong motivation makes individuals more resistant to failure because they see failure as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Woolley & Fishbach (2022) in their study showed that individuals who seek discomfort as part of personal growth show higher motivation to thrive. Self-motivation encourages individuals to improve interpersonal communication skills.

Motivation for self-change also encourages a person to improve skills such as active listening, speaking assertively, and understanding other people's perspectives. A student who aspires to become a public speaker, for example, will take advantage of public speaking opportunities, such as class presentations or seminars, to practice his speaking skills. Openness to suggestions and criticism is an important part of this development process.

To maintain motivation, individuals can set realistic short-term and long-term goals and evaluate their progress periodically. Surrounding yourself with a supportive environment, such as mentors or study groups, can also boost morale and accelerate the growth process.

With strong motivation, a person not only enriches his communication skills but also builds a higher sense of self-confidence. Finally, sustained motivation will help individuals adapt their communication styles according to the situation and create more positive and productive relationships.

3 Conclusion

Self-concept plays a central role in improving the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, as it provides a foundation for individuals to understand, accept, and manage themselves in a variety of interaction situations. Self-image, self-esteem, and ideal self help build self-confidence, while self-awareness, self-consistency, and self-perception in social contexts allow individuals to interact more confidently and relevantly. In addition, feedback from the environment, self-acceptance, and motivation for self-change strengthen the individual's ability to adapt and improve their communication patterns. By integrating these factors, one can create more harmonious, inclusive, and productive communication, which ultimately improves the quality of interpersonal relationships in various life contexts.

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