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Homeschool internship program for students' interpersonal communication development: A descriptive study

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Abstract

This study examined how the senior high school internship program at ABhome helped students develop their interpersonal communication skills. It employed a descriptive-qualitative method. An internship is a course requirement that gives students the opportunity to obtain practical experience at institutions or businesses to supplement their academic studies and to develop their knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. However, despite the critical necessity for the early development of interpersonal communication skills, this practice is only common at the university level in the Indonesian educational system. Interestingly, the internship program is applicable at the high school level in the homeschooling system. It employed a descriptive-qualitative method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eighteen students who had participated in an internship program. The interpersonal communication between students and mentors extends beyond internship-related discussions, encompassing casual conversations about various topics. The communication between students and mentors is effective for five reasons. Mentors are open to receiving input and delivering information, empathising with students, exhibiting a positive attitude, promoting respect, and demonstrating equal communication. The finding highlighted that the interpersonal communication between ABhome students and their mentors during the internship program effectively fosters qualities such as openness, empathy, supportiveness, and positivity.

Keywords: Empathy, Homeschooling, Internship, Interpersonal communication, Openness, Supportiveness.

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1. Introduction

Common understanding in communication is one of the keys to a harmonious relationship. Through interpersonal communication, teachers and students can exchange ideas and information with each other so that they reach the same understanding [1]. Interpersonal communication skills apply to any condition [2]. A person with less interpersonal communication competence often exhibits lower self-esteem [3, 4]. According to Wang et al. [5], interpersonal communication can increase social support while creating social harmony. Positive responses and harmonious relationships positively influence one's learning process and performance [6].

Communication is a bridge to achieving cooperative relationships. A harmonious relationship between an individual helps him or her accomplish his or her goal. The implementation of the internship program involves interpersonal relationships that cooperate towards common goals. An internship is essential to developing students' potential and building strength against challenges in the digital age [7]. It is a learning activity through direct practice for students [8].

An internship program is an initiative that aids in the enhancement of interpersonal communication skills. This program encompasses an individual's interaction within formal organizations, offering a platform to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in the real workplace [9]. The implementation of the internship program involves interpersonal relationships that cooperate towards common goals. An internship is a means to develop students' potential and face various challenges in the digital age [7]. The internship program is a practice-based learning activity for students [8].

An internship is an activity within a curriculum for students to get direct experience in training institutions or companies to complement their formal learning at school [10]. It improves students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to get to know the world of work [11]. Nonetheless, within the Indonesian education system, this practice is only prevalent at the university level, despite the imperative need for developing interpersonal communication skills to begin as early as high school. Meanwhile, in the education system of homeschooling, internship program can be implemented at the high school level.

One of the homeschool institutions in Indonesia that organizes an internship program at the senior high school level is ABhome high school. The program is intended, among others, to practice interpersonal communication skills. This research aimed to examine the effectiveness of the internship program at ABhome Senior High School in improving students' interpersonal communication skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internship Program

An internship is a program that involves hands-on practice at work that allows students to face new challenges and test their skills and knowledge [12]. It is beneficial for students to develop creativity, skills, problem-solving skills, and adaptability to work [12]. An internship is a means to practice independence and improve communication, organization, and project management skills which are challenges for students [13]. Researchers find out the components of an internship program to determine the elements applicable to those who want to develop and design a new internship program [14].

As explained above, one of the benefits of internships is that they improve interpersonal communication skills. Communication is the basic element of a human being that promotes interpersonal relationships. The quality of communication greatly influences the quality of interpersonal relationships. Communication is essential in forging interpersonal relationships, which support the interaction of individuals to understand others effectively [15]. A study suggested that interpersonal communication skills among students play a significant role in building problem-solving competence [16]. Students should be provided with ample opportunities to cultivate their communication skills through training and practical experience, as communication abilities cannot be solely imparted in a classroom setting [17].

Soft skills are often referred to as "non-cognitive skill." Interpersonal competence is one of the soft skills [18]. Effective interpersonal communication skills are very important, especially when one performs activities in formal situations, e.g., at work, in which we should interact face-to-face with others [19].

An internship is a practical avenue for enhancing interpersonal communication, which serves as a vital soft skill required by students. Through internships, students gain hands-on experience in training that complements their formal learning curriculum at school. Research on internship programs within educational institutions is conducted to identify various factors that could potentially hinder the accomplishment of the intended goals [10]. An internship can effectively prepare students to be better professionals. It enhances their skill set, provides insight into their chosen profession, boosts confidence and independence, and augments job prospects post-graduation [8]. In the implementation of the internship program, students are required to have a high point and the ability to work with others to meet the internship requirements [14]. The internship program represents a novel training approach that fosters collaboration between educational institutions and contributes to enhancing students' practical scientific skills within the realm of professional work [11].

There are differences in the internship programs offered by the formal and non-formal educational systems in Indonesia, generally. The distinction is that homeschooling and other non-formal education programs allow for internships to begin as early as high school. While this is going on, the official school system offers internship programs through fieldwork practice activities at the middle school vocational level and the higher education level.

2.2. Homeschool

Homeschool is a non-formal education that is an alternative education to accommodate the potential of children's intelligence and talents. Career exploration in the homeschooling education system is established through internships based on the children's interests and talents. Choosing a homeschool path provides opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills [20]. One of its successes is the freedom to choose the model and time for learning that are

suitable for students [20]. Researchers noted that homeschooling is an educational and pedagogical option, a means by which parents can be involved in the implementation of their children's education [21]. The key to the success of the homeschool community is to have good management for planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising to further improve the quality of homeschool [20].

2.3. Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication

According to DeVito [22], interpersonal refers to communication between people face-to-face, which allows each participant to capture the reactions of others directly, both verbally and nonverbally. Interpersonal communication is feedback related to each other to help someone improve personal effectiveness and effectiveness between individuals. Interpersonal communication requires actors to meet face-to-face and bring verbal or nonverbal messages so that each can understand the other and interact effectively.

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is underpinned by five overarching qualities: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. Openness refers to the disposition to accept others' opinions and inputs while also sharing information openly. It involves providing information without restriction and being receptive to input. Empathy entails understanding and appreciating another person's perspective, allowing one to grasp their feelings and situations. Empathetic individuals can comprehend the motivations, emotions, and attitudes of others. Meanwhile, supportiveness is manifested when communication parties mutually commit to bolstering one another, fostering an environment conducive to open interaction. Positiveness is expressed through behavior, representing a constructive attitude during communication, while equality signifies the recognition of equal worth and value for both communication parties. It involves reciprocal respect between parties engaged in communication. Each individual supports each other and appreciates each other for the creation of common goals [22].

Moreover, Merta [23] proposed two approaches to exhibiting a favorable attitude in interpersonal communication: Firstly, interpersonal communication thrives when individuals possess positive self-regard. Secondly, promoting a positive outlook among individuals engaged in mutual and egalitarian interactions fosters more effective interpersonal communication within an equitable atmosphere.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Approach

The current study employed a qualitative descriptive method. The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews and reviews of related literature. The interviews were performed with open-ended and closed questions.

The research was conducted for one year, from July 2021 to July 2022, in four stages. The first stage of the research (July–October 2021) involved a theoretical study of the issue of interpersonal communications in the current literature, outlining the variables of the effectiveness of interpersonal communications for the purposeful improvement of students' communication skills. The second stage (November–December 2021) involved the development of a plan for interview questions for homeschoolers as students. The third stage (January–March 2022) was in-depth interviews with the selected participants. The researchers conducted interviews with eight students from ABhome. The fourth stage (April–July 2022) was data reduction and analysis. The results of the in-depth interview were processed in data reductions, followed by data analysis.

3.2. Sampling

The participants were eighteen students of ABhome who had taken an internship program. The school principal assisted in the participant selection. Two participants were from grade X (female), five participants were from grade XI (two female and three male), and eleven participants were from grade XII (five female and six male). Based on the variety of work fields and locations they participated in the internship program, the principal choose them.

They were asked to answer a series of structured questions with the following topics: 1) job description; 2) communication with the mentors in the internship program; and 3) five components of effective interpersonal communication ("supportiveness, empathy, openness, positiveness, and equality"). All participants answered all the questions during the interview. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interview results are listed in Table 1 below. Table 1 describes the results of interviews with 18 ABhome students who have participated in the internship program. Two participants are from class X (female), five participants are from class XI (two females and three males), and eleven participants are from class XII (five females and six males). They have diverse experiences in the real workplace as interns, such as designing posters for marketing, packing goods, and dealing with the administration of the company online shop, as depicted by participant 1. Participant 2, who goes to Bali Art House, is in charge of creating a building plan and sketchbook. Meanwhile, participant 3, who works for the information technology company, is responsible for controlling the active and inactive routers with consistent daily reports. Participant 4 works in a psychiatric hospital. Her daily work is making appointments with clients, attending rehabilitation classes, and accompanying the clients. Participants 5 and 6 work for the publishing company. They are responsible for content writing, reading some news, articles, and novels, creating quizzes, and sometimes accompanying mentors when meeting clients. Participants 7, 8, 9, and 10 work in the fashion online shop, astronomy museum, music studio, and social security employment program. They directly practice working according to the work division in their respective places of work, such as packing the product, doing graphic design, media marketing, content creation, and data matching. Participant 11 experiences the internship at Best Travel as an administrator and on the event committee. Meanwhile, participant 12 works at Art Galery Creative as a teacher assistant. Participants 13, 14, and 15 work in IPB Hospital as assistant for doctor assistance, in the photography studio as event photographers, and in

the pharmacy as assistant pharmacists. Participant 16 works in the school library as an administrator, in charge of returning the books to the shelves and tidying up the library. Participant 17 works in the coffeeshop as a barista, chef, waitress, and cashier. Lastly, participant 18 works at PT. Balikpapan Environmental Services in the plant process department. In that department, he is responsible for sorting letters and documents, stamping letters and documents, operating incinerators and assisting mentors with tasks.

Table 1.
The internship location and job description of the participants.

Grade	Place of internship	Job description
Participant 1 (XI grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making promotional designs, packing goods, online shop admin
Participant 2 (XI grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architect's office • Bali art house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a building plan and also a sketchbook • Making a photobook from the work of Photography
Participant 3 (XI grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Technology Company • Location mapping company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling active and inactive routers and making daily reports; sometimes taking a part in the field with a technician to help fix a problem • Providing services, websites (Web developer), and applications
Participant 4 (XI grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological consulting • Psychiatric Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making appointments with clients. When there are workshops or seminars, we make flyers, prepare Zoom, and create the required data. • Completing rehabilitation classes and accompanying patients
Participant 5 (XI grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant engineering • Magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a letter and given documents from the previous year; reading and making similar letters • Magazine Content creator division: Reading articles, reading novels, making quizzes, creating content, writing reviews, writing articles, choosing photos, making carousels, creating content and trivia
Participant 6 (XII grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a content creator and working on projects, and also accompanying mentors to meet clients
Participant 7 (X grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion Online Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product packing • Product development • Graphic design • Media marketing
Participant 8 (XI grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Astronomy Museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content creator for astronomy photos on Instagram
Participant 9 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Studio • Faber castell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music & dubbing • Photography & Advertising
Participant 10 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security Administrator for Employment Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data matching • Filling out insurance claim forms for the elderly • Folding brochures • Tidying up office documents • Transforming data form • Making a statement of fund expenditure
Participant 11 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Umrah package flyer graphic design • Umrah pilgrims' departure committee • Warehouse storage of travel equipment
Participant 12 (XII grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Gallery Creative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher assistance
Participant 12 (XII grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPB hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant for doctor co-assistant
Participant 14 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography studio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event photography
Participant 15 (XII grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacist assistant
Participant 16 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning books to shelves • Cleaning the library • Serving people who want to borrow and return books

Grade	Place of internship	Job description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidying up books
Participant 17 (XII grade) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polka coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barista • Chef • Waiter • Cashier
Participant 18 (XII grade) female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PT. Balikpapan environmental services 	Plant process department: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sort letters and documents • Stamp letters and documents • Operate incinerator machine • Assist mentor tasks

4. Results

4.1. The Initial Communication between Participants and Mentors

The communication between participants and mentors at the beginning of the internship program begins in a meeting, which is the interview and introduction session. Participant 1, Participant 3, and Participant 6 are all experiencing this.

“Before starting the internship, I met and became acquainted with the mentor (Participant 1). So, we met before the day, and after that, it's time for an internship. The second mentor was also an acquaintance, chatted, and then sent a portfolio, so it's an acquaintance (Participant 3). Incidentally, my mentor during my internship, at first, I chatted with high school students, so he told me slowly when I was on the first day what your work was like and what kind of work. During the interview, I was nervous, and the mentor immediately explained to me the job clearly and correctly” (Participant 6).

Participant 5, Participant 2, and Participant 11 experienced the communication process at different early stages. The two of them did not go through the interview stage or the initial introduction to the mentor. They met their mentor for the first time on the first day of the internship.

“About three or four hours early on the first day, we chatted with the mentor before being given an assignment (Informant 5). We were directly given assignments without an interview process with the mentor.” (Participant 2). “Interaction with the mentor began with introductions of all staff and continued working on the assignment given.” (Participant 11)

4.2. Open Communication between Mentors and Informants during Internships

In general, the communication between the participants and the mentors ran effectively. The mentors welcomed any questions and were willing to discuss them in case the participants required further explanation.

Participant 1 had two mentors. Each mentor had a different occupation. The first mentor directly guided them in the fieldwork, and the second mentor was a company leader who provided direction for his staff, which was subsequently forwarded to Participant 1. Open communication was well established with mentor 2 (the field mentor). Some communication occurred with topics outside the work.

“We often discussed about design. If I was confused, I immediately asked my mentor. Sometimes, I spoke with him like I did with my friend. He also told me to ask him directly if I needed an explanation. Usually, we were reminded, and revisions were also given. For example, if the color was not fine, he told us directly and not pushed us too much.” (Participant 1).

Open communication between Participant 4 and the mentor at the psychiatric hospital began with a job description and internship rules. Participant 4 immediately asked if they needed things to be further explained. At the initial meeting, the mentor did not directly discuss the internship but started with an informal introduction stage with the mentor. After the introduction stage and interactive informal communication, the mentor explained the job description.

“He was more active, asking me questions, then I asked him back. So, the conversation was more intense too. Yes, at work directly. Initially, i explained the work and regulations. At this hospital, the mentors are the best, so if there's anything you want to tell him, tell him. Yes, it is still about work, and I feel like I can be open. In our first meeting, we had a casual chat at first, followed with the internship topics.”(Participant 4)

Open communication was found by almost all of the participants. Each of them was comfortable discussing and asking openly with mentors about the tasks during the internship. Each mentor provided an opportunity for the participant to directly ask if they needed an explanation. Besides, the mentors offered help if they encountered difficulties.

“I feel quite open with mentors in those two places because the conversation is relaxed. For example, if something is missing while doing the assignment, the mentor will help and explain.” (Participant 5)
“My first internship wasn't very open with the intern mentor. During the internship in Bali, they were a bit more open because they were alone there, so they could communicate more intensely with mentors. The mentor was communicative, so my communication skills had increased. It could be more open because people only supervise their employees automatically, so I could freely ask the mentor. But I still maintain communication anyway, considering that he was more advanced.” (Participant 2)

"If the communication is more open, the first is because it seems like a friend, not a mentor, while the second is more formal." (Participant 3)

"Yes, I adapted it for the first month because the mentor was rarely in the office, but in terms of the environment, he was more open, friendly, open, and caring. Other employees told me about the character of my mentor. And when I was at the office, I immediately approached, and my mentor tried to reach out directly by the way he had a brand and asked me for help." (Participant 6)

4.3. Supportive Communication

One indicator of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication is support in the form of words or attitudes. Participants shared their experiences when they received support from mentors when they encountered difficulties in doing assignments. The support provided by the mentor was manifested through attitudes and words.

"Feeling helped by a mentor when experiencing difficulties. The mentor immediately explained the method (Participant 1). Mentors provided support, such as motivation. Sometimes, in the morning, he said, "I'm excited today," and when I looked tired, he said, "Keep spirit!" (Participant 4).

The experiences of participants 5 and 11 while completing tasks assigned by the mentor exceeded expectations, yet the mentor continued to offer guidance and support.

"My mentor was supportive when teaching me. For example, when there was something I didn't understand, he taught me how to use software applications. From there, I felt their supportive attitude. I was given a design task, so I designed based on my abilities. Finally, I was taught the right way. I was supported and told to try an application; it gave me more insight." (Participant 5). "When I encountered difficulties in doing the assignment, the mentor was very kind and open to help sincerely." (Participant 11)

Appreciative sentences were also given by the mentor to the work of the participant. The support was in the form of verbal encouragement, so that Participant 2 felt more enthusiastic and knew his ability to complete his work.

"When I was able to do the task faster, the mentor said, "Wow, that's fast." I think that's supportive language because you can work faster and then you are given another assignment. My mentor said, "You should have been able to do this job at another place." Later, when I go to college, I won't have to worry anymore because my mentor said that I already have the required skills. (Participant 2).

"Support from mentors is often from verbal communication, such as, Wow, you are strong even though you are still young. Then, he feels that I am still at this teenage level, and he sometimes likes to try to approach me by giving an affirmative word. The support by the mentor makes me more enthusiastic, and praise like "the content is good, okay, it's great", is compelling. (Participant 6)

"If we have something we don't understand about the task, the mentor is always open to guiding us." (Participant 15)

4.4. Empathetic Communication

The participant's experience of communicating with mentors who are both older and more educated does not pose a barrier. Participant 1 perceives that the mentor assigns tasks based on the participant's high school-level abilities, distinct from other street vendors, highlighting a differentiated approach. Participant 6 feels that the mentor is empathetic in communicating with them by adjusting the communication understood by the participant so that communication occurs with mutual understanding. Participant 10 felt that the mentor was empathetic by giving directions according to his condition while he was still in high school. The mentor empathized by appreciating and assigning tasks according to the participants' abilities.

"I feel that I am not (being treated the same as street vendors) or being treated the same as college students (Participant 1). I was compared to street vendors. Hence, for consideration of acceptance into the company, the standard of activity is lowered." (Participant 3)

"I feel more curious than their curiosity about homeschooling. From there it becomes curious and forms of communication for the material topic. Another form of empathy was that at the beginning I was given an internship assignment that was adapted for high school students, then over time giving the assignment didn't feel like it was for high school students and there weren't too many limits." (Participant 6)

"My mentor gives me more attention. I still don't know how to do the assignment because I study in a public high school, not a vocational school." (Participant 10)

"The way my mentor empathized with me was by giving me appreciation and not giving me heavy assignments." (Participant 13)

"At first I was given an easy task, then the difficulty level got higher as I felt I was able to do it." (Participant 18)

4.5. Equal Communication

The mentor positions himself like a friend so that the participant can communicate comfortably. Although the mentor has more knowledge and experience, he shows an equal position to that of the participant as a friend.

"What I feel when they teach is that they are not very patronizing; they can position themselves like that (Participant 5). He is like a friend, even though he has more experience. He treats us as friends (Participant 4). The first mentor seemed to be a bit younger, so it was as if I were his friend, often talking

about family and sometimes other familiar topics.” (Participant 3). “Despite the generation gap, my mentor uses our common language style that I understand.” (Participant 10). “My mentor was responsive and never ignored me.” (Participant 18)

4.6. Positive Attitude

After communicating with the mentor, Participant 3 can observe the mentor’s positive attitude in their daily lives. The attitude of the mentor is an example for Participant 3 to become more diligent, more open-minded, and more serious at works

“The positive attitude of the mentor made me more determined, more open-minded, more serious, and more positive.” (Participant 3)

In addition, the participant noted that the mentor's positive attitude towards communicating as an internship experience made the participant more adaptive to facing the new environment.

“Internship experience means meeting new people and being more accessible to new environments.” (Participant 3)

Participant 6 also expressed a positive view of the mentor's positive attitude. The mentor serves as a role model for participants, demonstrating diligence and effective time management across diverse tasks and activities. His communication style is also a role model for participants.

“...a positive attitude of the hard-working mentor. My mentor has an agency, and he is a presenter. I’m also busy with meeting agendas in many places. He is my role model. The way he communicates-for example, when correcting my work-is straightforward. His words are direct and to the point.” (Participant 6)

In addition, participant 6 sometimes receives appreciation from the mentor when he is given an internship opportunity. Even though participant 6 does not meet a qualification in terms of educational level, as the mentor needs college students, he treats the participant well, even equalizing the treatment to that of interns from higher schools.

“I appreciate the internship opportunity provided by the mentor. When I was accepted, I was a high school student, and the mentor needed college students back then. It was an opportunity that not everyone could give me. The mentor did not underestimate my ability, even though I was still in high school.” (Participant 6)

“The lesson is that older people can understand communication better at work, being able to adjust to the situation during the talk, either a discussion about work or a casual chat.” (Participant 5)

“The positive attitudes exemplified by the mentors are hard work and appreciation, and they also do not show superiority.” (Participant 13)

“My mentor taught me not to give up easily.” (Participant 16)

5. Discussion

Interpersonal relationships begin and develop through communication. The quality of human communication defines one’s interpersonal relationships. To explore the interests and talents of students, ABhome sets up an internship program. Besides exploring interests and talents, this program aims to enhance students’ interpersonal communication skills.

An internship can help you develop and refine your interpersonal communication abilities. The outcomes of the current study on interpersonal communication between interns and mentors include openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positivity. The strategy used during the first meeting process before the internship is implemented affects the level of openness inside the program. It is necessary to have a casual first meeting and interview so that mentors can learn more about the potential interns. On the other side, because they will have gotten to know the mentor who will help them throughout the internship, they will also be more prepared to begin an internship program following the meeting.

The student’s initial impression of the mentor will create the basis for how he or she will communicate. It facilitates the students to acknowledge the age gap, the character of the mentor, whether he or she is an extrovert or an introvert, and the communication style. It is important information that makes it a challenge for students to easily adjust their communication with the mentors during the internships. Open communication is influenced by the attitude of the mentor, whether he or she is friendly, guides them with the job descriptions, or is willing to answer any questions. As a result, when students encounter issues, they share them with the mentor. They don't hesitate to ask questions or start a conversation.

A supportive attitude is one indicator of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. According to the students, mentors provide verbal and non-verbal support. Verbal support manifests in different ways, such as by giving encouragement to students at the beginning of the workday or expressing appreciation for the participants' contributions. Meanwhile, non-verbal support includes for example, providing direction when carrying out tasks and assisting the work of participants when experiencing difficulties. Giving support (supportiveness) can effectively increase interpersonal relationships [23].

Empathy is one of the most important interpersonal communication skills for fostering an interpersonal relationship. According to the interns, the mentors tried to adjust their treatment according to the students’ skills and education level, as they were still in senior high school. From the interview result, the students feel that the mentor does not equate the treatment or job description with that of college interns. The mentor's empathy is intended to lower the task standard from the internship student standard, which is adjusted to the senior high school level.

Apart from empathy, the students also feel that mentors are like friends, not bosses. Mentors position themselves equally with students through intimate communication, providing guidance, and daily communication outside the context of the task. During the implementation of the internship, the students can directly see the character and communication

style of the mentor. The positive attitude of the mentor, which is imitated by the students, is related to his positive character, which is hardworking, disciplined, and straightforward in communication style. Some students argue that through internships, they understand interpersonal communication with older people. The internship experience enhances the participant's ability to adjust the communication style with the mentor according to the situation and conditions.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the internship program is more than an opportunity for students to discover their interests and abilities. In formal settings, notably the workplace, internships are another way to practice interpersonal communication skills. An internship is an activity within a curriculum for students to get direct experience in training institutions or companies to complement their formal learning at school and to improve students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It provides practical experience through direct engagement in interpersonal communication with mentors. The interpersonal communication between students and mentors extends beyond internship-related discussions, encompassing casual conversations about various topics. The communication between students and mentors is effective for five reasons. Mentors are open to receiving input and delivering information, have a sense of empathy for students, exhibit a positive attitude, promote respect, and demonstrate equal communication.

This study is another step towards understanding the importance of an interest-based internship at the high school level. It contributes to a broader perspective on career exploration through internships at homeschool and at the high school level in terms of interpersonal communication skills in the workplace.

7. Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the government and other related parties are expected to introduce an internship program for students at the high school level in both formal and informal institutions. Further, it is essential to conduct surveys and a broader qualitative analysis of interpersonal communication skill development among senior high school students.

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Appendix I.

Questionnaire about internship process
Tell us about internship process?

Part I.	
General questions	
The essence of the question	
1.	Tell us about the selection of the internship place
2.	How was the initial interaction with your mentor?"
3.	What is your job description?
4.	How long does the internship program perform?
5.	How did the mentor give direction regarding job descriptions?
6.	How was the communication with the mentor when there were problems or questions regarding the work being done?

Appendix I presents the question for knowing the participant internship initial activities.

Appendix II.

Questionnaire about interpersonal communication
Tell us how your mentor communicated with you during the internship program

Part II.	
Specific questions.	
Interpersonal communication	
1	The openness of communication between mentors and informants during internships
2	Supportive Communication mentors and informants during internships
3	Empathy communication with mentors and informants during internships
4	Equal communication mentors and informants during internships
5	A positive attitude from mentor (Positiveness) mentors and informants during internships

What are your ideas about practicing interpersonal communications skills through an internship program?

Appendix II presents the question for knowing interpersonal communication during the internship program between participant and mentor.