

Persuasive Communication on the " Well Being for Apple (WBA) Psychology Community" in Fostering the Learning Motivation of Port Children

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Abstract

This study aims to examine persuasive communication practices implemented by the Well Being for Apple (WBA) Psychology Community of Trunojoyo Madura University in fostering learning motivation among children in the Kamal Port area, Bangkalan regency. Employing a qualitative intrinsic case study via participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that persuasive communication significantly enhances motivation through communicator credibility, engaging delivery, emotional involvement, and positive reinforcement. There are some strategies such as educational games, verbal encouragement, and simple rewards stimulate voluntary participation, while consistent supportive interactions strengthen message acceptance and sustained engagement. The study concludes that persuasive communication is an effective mechanism for nonformal education in socioeconomically limited contexts, offering empirical insights for developing inclusive community learning models.

Keywords– Learning Motivation, Marginalized Children, Persuasive Communication.



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1. Introduction

The Kamal West Port area in Bangkalan, is one of the hubs of economic activity for the coastal communities of Madura. Although the port's function has declined since the Suramadu Bridge began operating, community activity remains high and intense, involving children from families with limited economic resources. Many of these children do not attend school due to family pressures, such as the need to help their parents with work, including selling goods on ships, collecting scrap metal, and looking after stalls. This situation highlights a serious problem in access to education for children living in coastal areas.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2024) show that there are more than two thousand elementary school-aged children in Kamal subdistrict who are not enrolled in formal schools. This condition is also in line with the findings of the local government, reports indicating that the number of school dropouts in Bangkalan has reached 35 thousand children (Faisol, 2025). The coastal economy and culture are the main factors contributing to the low level of educational continuity. Government programs such as PIP and basic education services have not been able to fully reach these children due to administrative obstacles such as lack of a National Student Identification Number (NISN) or failure to enroll in school. (Adiastuti, 2025).

The Well Being for Apel (WBA) Psychology community operates amid these limitations as a form of non-formal community-based education that offers an alternative learning space for children in Kamal Port, Bangkalan. Based on the interview results, there are 13 children who actively participate in WBA Psychology learning activities. Teaching activities are held three times a week and consist of reading, writing, arithmetic, and educational games. Researcher observations show that children demonstrate high enthusiasm toward the facilitators when they use a warm, personal communication approach accompanied by rewards. This shows that persuasive communication has a significant influence on the readiness and motivation of port children to learn.

A review of the literature on non-formal education shows that previous studies have had a limited focus on variables. A study conducted by (Asmarita & Sari, 2022) examined persuasive strategies in community settings, but the discussion was limited to reading interest and did not touch on learning motivation as a whole. Research by (Herlina et al., 2025) also focused more on the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach and institutional collaboration; consequently, an in-depth analysis of the persuasive communication process was overlooked. The absence of research that specifically examines the persuasive strategies of volunteers towards children in coastal environments is a gap that needs to be filled. This study offers something new by placing persuasive communication as the main instrument in overcoming learning motivation barriers in marginalized children with low socioeconomic backgrounds. The focus on the interaction between community volunteers and children in the Kamal Port area provides empirical contributions that have not been found in previous studies.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to address the high risk of school dropouts among children in the coastal area of Kamal Port. Economic and social environmental factors in this region stems from. Understanding persuasive strategies is crucial to ensuring that the assistance provided by volunteers is targeted and not merely a social activity. The absence of this study raises concerns that community-based education programs will be implemented without a clear evaluation strategy for building long-term learning motivation. The findings of this study will serve as a practical reference for the WBA community, educational institutions, and local governments in designing inclusive guidance patterns that are relevant to the characteristics of marginalized children today.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, aiming to understand deeply the persuasive communication practices applied by the WBA Psychology UTM community. An intrinsic case study approach was

selected because the phenomenon of persuasive communication being studied has specific and contextual characteristics (Creswell, 2013). This study uses a postpositivism paradigm, which views social reality as observable yet relative and influenced by the context and interpretations of the researcher and participants. This paradigm is relevant for examining the complex phenomenon of persuasive communication, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative measurement. (Abdussamad, 2021).

The research subjects were five active members of the UTM Psychology WBA community who were directly involved in tutoring children in Kamal Port. The focus of this research is the persuasive communication carried out by the UTM Psychology WBA community. Informants were determined using purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on their direct involvement and specific criteria established by the researcher. (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). The main informants were administrators from the UTM Psychology WBA Community who actively assisted out-of-school children in the coastal area of Kamal Port.

Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted using moderate participatory methods, in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured methods, and documentation consisted of photographs of activities, field notes, and activity archives. Data analysis was conducted inductively using a qualitative analysis model (Creswell, 2013) which included the stages of data organization, comprehensive reading, theme development, descriptive data presentation and interpretation, and drawing conclusions.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation (Sugiyono, 2020). Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data from the core administrators, public relations division staff, former members who were still involved in the field, and internal community documents. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. This research was conducted at Kamal Port, Kamal District, Bangkalan Regency, Madura. This site was selected

because it is the primary location for is the location for the implementation of the WBA Psychology UTM community learning assistance activities.

3. Result and Discussion

This study found that persuasive communication applied by the Well Being for APEL (WBA) Psychology Community workes as the main mechanism in addressing the learning motivation gap among children in the Kamal Port area. Given the characteristics of coastal children, who are vulnerable, possess short attention spans and experience fluctuating emotional states, the persuasive approach is not merely a technique for delivering material, but rather a psychological foundation for building security and trust before the cognitive process can take place. The findings and discussion are described based on key elements in the persuasion process.

Volunteers' Verbal Communication in Building Children's Motivation

Interview results and field observations reveal that verbal communication serves as the primary instrument used by volunteers to reduce children's resistance. Volunteers consistently adopt a gentle and friendly tone of voice, combined with a personal approach. Ongky, one of the volunteers, emphasized the importance of vocal tone, stating that using a harsh tone of voice often causes children to feel afraid and reduces the effectiveness of the learning process. He further explained that teaching with a soft and gentle tone tends to increase children's compliance and engagement during learning activities. This finding is supported by Dinda, who applies storytelling techniques to enhance message relevance and comprehension. For instance, she integrates basic numeracy into simple narratives, such as counting objects (e.g., one apple, two apples), to facilitate understanding. Additionally, volunteers consciously avoid the use of harsh language in order to model positive behavior, particularly given that children in the port area are frequently exposed to rough or aggressive language in their daily environment.

The effectiveness of persuasion is highly dependent on source credibility, which consists of expertise and trustworthiness, as conceptualized within the

framework of persuasive communication theory. (Hovland, 1953), In the context of WBA, volunteers' credibility is not established through academic credentials, but rather through goodwill, which is conveyed via verbal warmth. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by (Nadiya et al., 2023), which emphasizes that communicators who demonstrate personal attention and warmth are more readily accepted by children and adolescents within community settings. When WBA volunteers use simple language and avoid rigid forms of authority, they reduce children's psychological barriers enabling educational messages to penetrate the stages of attention and comprehension. In contrast to teachers in formal schools who possess institutional authority, WBA volunteers must continually "earn" their authority in each encounter through the consistent use of verbal gentleness.

Nonverbal Communication in Fostering Children's Closeness and Comfort

This study finds that nonverbal communication functions as a primary foundation in establishing emotional security and trust prior to the initiation of the learning process. Within the framework of the Yale Attitude Change Model, (Hovland, 1953) explains that nonverbal cues reinforce the communicator's credibility (source credibility) and condition the psychological readiness of the audience. Ongky (Public Relations staff) emphasized children's sensitivity to body language. tense facial expressions or dominant body postures (such as standing upright) tend to make children feel intimidated and withdraw. As illustrated in Figure 1, the strategy of adopting a level eye-contact posture and displaying a friendly facial expression was found to be effective in fostering children's receptiveness to instructions.



Figure 1. Documentation of Volunteers' Nonverbal Approach

Nonverbal strategies were applied tactically to manage children's attention. Dinda and Dina (Event Division) employed hand gestures, nodding, and gentle eye contact as tools to redirect children's focus when they became distracted or to explain abstract concepts. Dina noted that visual cues, such as lightly tapping the table or smiling while tilting one's head, were more effective in alleviating tension than issuing harsh verbal commands. This finding is consistent with (Zabieno et al., 2025) who state that early childhood students process visual and emotional stimuli more rapidly than verbal language, making nonverbal communication an effective tool for regulating emotions in noisy environments.

Physical touch (haptic communication) was identified as a crucial instrument in building bonding. Aini and Bilqis revealed that simple forms of touch, such as holding hands, patting shoulders, or allowing children to sit on their laps, transformed shy children into more confident individuals. Field observations confirmed the pronounced need for affection, as children frequently initiated hugs or leaned against volunteers without hesitation. This finding strengthens previous studies, such as (Maisarah et al., 2023) which found that warm nonverbal communication reduces children's initial anxiety. The markedly higher intensity of physical touch at WBA compared to formal schools emerges as an adaptive response to the emotional needs of vulnerable coastal children, positioning

nonverbal communication not merely as a complementary element but as a fundamental prerequisite for successful educational persuasion.

Positive Reinforcement (Rewards) as Persuasive Incentives

The most dominant strategy identified in this study is the use of positive reinforcement in the form of material rewards (snacks/gifts) and social rewards (praise). Bilqis explicitly stated that rewards are provided after teaching sessions to motivate children's participation, noting that offering incentives such as snacks **prompts** children to complete tasks with greater enthusiasm. In addition to material incentives, Aini employed verbal praise as a motivational tool, emphasizing that acknowledging every achievement fosters children's confidence and prevents disengagement.

Observational findings indicate that children's enthusiasm increases significantly when they were aware of the presence of rewards, and become more compliant with instructions. Figure 2 illustrates the implementation of the Incentive component in persuasion theory, in which volunteers distributed snacks as a form of positive reinforcement.



Figure 2. Documentation of Reward Provision

This phenomenon can be explained through the Incentive concept in Hovland's model, which posits that attitude change occurs when audiences anticipate benefits or rewards from accepting a message. For children living in port areas under conditions of economic constraint, snack rewards function as concrete incentives that elicit compliance. Meanwhile, verbal praise fulfills their

psychological need for self-esteem. This finding is consistent with previous research by (Julita et al., 2025) and (Handayani et al., 2023) which conclude that rewards are effective in enhancing short-term learning motivation and students' self-confidence. However, this discussion also highlights a challenge: the motivation generated remains predominantly extrinsic. WBA children tend to rely on rewards to maintain focus. In contrast to formal school environments where academic grades function as incentives, within the WBA community volunteers must continuously provide external incentives to sustain children's engagement, indicating that the internalization of educational values is still progressing at a slow pace.

Emotional Approaches in Addressing Children's Psychological Fluctuations

This study finds that the psychological conditions of children at Kamal Port are highly fluctuating; they are easily bored, prone to tantrums, and exhibit short attention spans (approximately 5–10 minutes). In response to these conditions, volunteers employed a "pacing and leading" strategy. Bilqis explained that children cannot be forced to engage in learning activities; therefore, volunteers align with the children's current state, facilitating learning when they are willing and transitioning to play once they become disengaged. When children refuse to participate in learning activities, volunteers initially redirect them to play-based activities to re-stabilize their emotional state, after which educational content is gradually reintroduced.

This strategy demonstrates a high level of adaptation to audience characteristics. Hovland's theory emphasizes that messages must be tailored to the audience's readiness. Forcing children who are in a heightened emotional state is likely to produce a boomerang effect, resulting in total rejection of the message (Hovland, 1953). By accommodating children's need for play, volunteers construct a persuasive "bridge." This is relevant to findings by (Muridayani & Siregar, 2024), which emphasize that education for out-of-school or marginalized children must be flexible, enjoyable, and rooted in empathy. However, within the WBA context, play is not merely a supplementary method but functions as a strategy for conflict mitigation and emotional regulation, enabling communication

to be sustained. WBA volunteers act more as “educative play companions” rather than “instructive teachers,” representing a crucial role shift that facilitates higher acceptability among children.

Communication Challenges and Their Impact on Motivation

This study also reveals significant challenges that hinder the full effectiveness of persuasion. First, environmental disturbances, particularly port-related noise and aggressive child behavior frequently disrupt the message delivery process. Field observations indicate that constant noise makes it difficult for children to maintain focus, resulting in persuasive messages often preventing persuasive messages from being fully internalized. Second, volunteers’ emotional inconsistency poses a significant barrier. Dinda (Event Division staff) acknowledged that volunteers’ negative moods can be perceived by children and may evoke fear, noting that children are highly sensitive to emotional cues. Third, reliance on rewards leads to a sharp decline in motivation in the absence of incentives, indicating that intrinsic motivation has not yet been fully developed.

These challenges indicate the limitations of interpersonal persuasion in non-conducive environments. Hovland’s theory posits source consistency as a key determinant of persuasive effectiveness. When volunteers are fatigued or emotionally distressed, their credibility as a “safe haven” figure is **undermined**, causing children to revert to defensive or aggressive behaviors. This finding strengthens the argument by (Suryanti, 2024) that environmental support and educators’ emotional stability are critical factors in non-formal education. In the WBA context, the primary challenge lies in transforming reward-based compliance and personal closeness into autonomous intrinsic motivation, a process that requires sustained time and high consistency, both of which are difficult to achieve within a rotating volunteer system.

The data indicate that WBA’s persuasive communication has successfully influenced children’s behavior in the socio-emotional domain, making them more compliant, courageous, confident, and fosters an initial awareness of learning. While learning motivation has emerged, it remains highly dependent on the volunteers’ physical presence and emotional affection. WBA has been effective at

the Attention stage (through play and rewards) and the Comprehension stage (through simple language), and has also reached the Acceptance stage, as evidenced by the children's active participation. Nevertheless, the primary reinforcing factor is interpersonal relationships, reflecting a form of relationship-based persuasion. Unlike formal education studies that often emphasize curriculum or technological media, this study concludes that for marginalized coastal children, the "quality of relationships" constitutes the message itself. Persuasion occurs not through logical arguments regarding the future, but rather through the children's experience of feeling loved and valued in the present. Therefore, the effectiveness of persuasive communication within the WBA community lies in volunteers' ability to manage emotions and create a "safe space" within the harsh port environment.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that persuasive communication is a major factor in fostering children's motivation to learn in the context of community-based non-formal education. The persuasive strategies applied by the Well Being for Apple (WBA) Psychology Community operate by establishing the credibility of the communicator, clarity of the message, emotional involvement, and consistent positive reinforcement. Through non-coercive communication, the use of educational games, verbal encouragement, and simple rewards as persuasive stimuli, facilitators effectively shape children's attitudes toward learning activities and encourage voluntary participation in learning. The findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of persuasive communication is largely determined by the suitability of the message to the psychological and social conditions of the children and the frequency and intensity of sustained persuasive interaction. The impact of this research lies in its contribution to providing empirical evidence that persuasive communication can be a strategic instrument in influencing the learning motivation of marginalized children, while providing a conceptual foundation for developing of persuasive communication models in non-formal education and community-based learning programs.

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