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THE ROLE OF TEACHER INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN OVERCOMING EXPOSURE TO ANOMALY BRAINROT CONTENT IN THE GENERATION ALPHA AT MUHAMMADIYAH 36 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEDAN

Anisa Amelia Putri Lubis[1] Arifin Saleh[2] Rahmanita Ginting[3]
Master of Communication Studies Program
Postgraduate School of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the rise of the phenomenon of brainrot anomaly content that displays low-quality digital content in the form of short videos with *absurd visuals, music, and language* that has become a favorite and regular viewing for children belonging to the Alpha Generation. Brainrot anomaly content has a negative impact in the form of decreased cognitive abilities, affecting children's mental and social conditions. Interpersonal communication is the most important way to overcome and stop negative exposure to this content. This study aims to determine and analyze the role and supporting factors and obstacles of interpersonal communication of teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan in overcoming exposure to brainrot anomaly content in the alpha generation. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with the application of FIRO *(Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation) communication theory.* The results of the study show that teachers fulfill the implementation of three personal needs based on FIRO theory, namely (1) Inclusion, teachers recognize student behavior and ensure that exposed students feel neither isolated nor judged, then given the right direction and education. (2) Control, teachers ensure and monitor students consistently and evaluate student changes to leave watching brainrot anomaly content. (3) Affection, teachers prioritize care and affection to maintain interpersonal relationships so that students are more receptive to direction. The main supporting factors lie in interpersonal relationships and competence through communication by teachers and the availability of resources and support from the school. Inhibiting factors in this case lie in the literacy gap between senior teachers and parents and the lack of full control by teachers over students' digital activities outside the school environment. Based on the data obtained and in-depth studies, it can be concluded that the Role of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication has an important influence in overcoming exposure to brainrot anomalous content in the alpha generation at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan by recognizing and accepting, educating, controlling with full attention, and evaluating as an application of the FIRO theory which prioritizes the fulfillment of three personal needs in interpersonal communication practices.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Teacher Interpersonal Communication, Alpha Generation, Brainrot Anomaly Content

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought about major changes in social life, not least in the educational environment, which has also experienced changes in interaction patterns and learning processes. One of the significant changes currently occurring can be seen in the communication and behavior patterns of Generation Alpha, the generation born between 2010 and 2024. Generation Alpha grew up and developed in an environment heavily influenced by digital advancements, so that digitalization has become an inseparable part of everyday life for Generation Alpha.

In today's digital era, marked by technological advancements, human life has undergone various changes, particularly in communication and information acquisition. These developments have brought convenience, but also created negative impacts that are difficult to avoid. This technological advancement, which has revolutionized the way we interact and learn, not only provides extraordinary convenience in various aspects of daily life, but also creates a number of negative impacts originating from the digital world, impacts that are often difficult to avoid or even completely ignore in modern society (Saleh, 2023) . Generation Alpha, born in the digital era, grew up with extensive exposure to information and communication technology, thus possessing unique characteristics that differ from previous generations. Generation Alpha grew up amidst a flood of digital content, ranging from entertainment and education to a variety of information easily accessible through gadgets and social media *platforms* . However, this ease of access also carries real risks in the form of exposure to less than beneficial content, which can even negatively impact the cognitive and psychological development, thought patterns, and behavior of children, especially Generation Alpha. One type of content that can influence this is anomalous content known as "Brainrot." Content that is absurd, illogical, or even contains elements of violence and sexuality, as well as elements of cognitive disorder, can influence children's thought patterns and behavior. This digital content phenomenon, often referred to as "Brainrot Anomaly," is widespread across various platforms, potentially disrupting children's thought processes and psychological development, particularly among Generation Alpha.

Brainrot Anomaly content features highly stimulating visuals and audio (striking colors, rapid movement, repetition, and *catchy* music or sounds), triggering excessive dopamine release in the brain and causing sensory overstimulation. This overstimulation is associated with decreased concentration, feelings of restlessness when not watching, and a tendency to seek increasingly extreme and unreasonable stimuli to feel “entertained” (Putri, 2025).

The phenomenon of shallow, repetitive, and minimal educational content is termed the brainrot anomaly, because the term "Brain Rot" refers to the condition of "Brain Rot" caused by excessive consumption of low-quality digital content, especially short videos with absurd visuals and repetitive music can disrupt the ability to think critically, focus, and difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction. This condition can cause a decline in logical ability, learning motivation, and even affect emotional and social development. Generation Alpha is in a very critical period of brain development, this risk is very serious and requires special attention from parents, the surrounding environment , and is a major challenge for educators.

The role of teachers as educators extends beyond delivering academic material, serving as facilitators and communicators, crucially shaping students' understanding and attitudes toward various phenomena, including exposure to digital content that has the potential to disrupt cognitive development. In these circumstances, the role of teachers as key communicators in the school environment becomes crucial. Teachers can help students, particularly those from Generation Alpha, select the digital content they receive, strengthen their psychological resilience in the face of various digital content influences, and guide their understanding of the negative impacts of Brainrot Anomaly content.

Exposure to Brainrot Anomaly content among Generation Alpha is a serious concern for several reasons. First, Brainrot Anomaly content can trigger digital addiction, hinder learning abilities, make it difficult to concentrate on other things, and even cause mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Second, Brainrot Anomaly content often contains messages that are inconsistent with educational and moral values, which can negatively influence children's character development and behavior. Third, Brainrot Anomaly content can isolate children from social interaction and make it difficult to compare real things with animation because the content displays forms that do not match what is supposed to be and plays language that is difficult to understand.

The effects of "brainrot" include a weakening of the brain and cognitive abilities, making individuals less able to think deeply. This can also impact mental health, increasing the risk of stress, anxiety, and depression. Dr. Sophie Li of the Black Dog Institute found a correlation between longer screen time and lower mental health scores in adolescents. However, the causal relationship is not entirely clear (Huda, 2024) .

Interpersonal communication is a strategic step to address the negative impacts of exposure to Brainrot Anomaly content frequently consumed by Generation Alpha children. Interpersonal communication serves as a medium for listening, expressing, supporting, educating, and guiding. Through effective interpersonal communication in the face of exposure to less beneficial content frequently accessed by Generation Alpha children, teachers can recognize changes in students' behavior and mindsets that have been influenced by such content.

Through good interpersonal communication, teachers can observe the behavior of students affected by digital content, especially Brainrot Anomaly content. As the adults who interact most frequently with students at school, teachers play a crucial role through interpersonal communication, which serves as a primary strategy in overcoming the negative impacts of exposure to Brainrot anomaly content. A good approach allows teachers to recognize changes in students' attitudes early on, correct misunderstandings caused by the broadcast, and provide education that aligns with students' understanding.

The success of teacher interpersonal communication is strengthened by a relationship of trust between teachers and students and the implementation of interpersonal communication that is in accordance with student criteria. Supporting factors include school policies that integrate the relationship between teachers and students to be open and provide time for activities and evaluations that can facilitate the role of interpersonal communication. However, limited teacher competence in dealing with the phenomenon of anomalous content and high workloads are inhibiting factors that reduce teachers' ability to conduct interpersonal communication in addressing exposure to brainrot content in students.

Muhammadiyah Elementary School 36 Medan is an educational institution that prioritizes character-based learning and competency excellence, committed to building students' character and academic achievement amidst the challenges of modernization. The phenomenon of exposure to Anomali Brainrot content has also become a real problem, as teachers from several schools have complained about it, noting the tendency of students to spend hours on gadgets and frequently access less educational content. This phenomenon has prompted the need to understand the role of teacher interpersonal communication as an effective strategy in minimizing the negative impacts.

The brainrot anomaly phenomenon, popular among the Alpha generation in Medan, began in early 2025, featuring a viral digital content trend, particularly on social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube. The brainrot anomaly depicts *absurd characters or memes* displayed in strange visuals, combining living and inanimate objects with unique names. Initially viral overseas, particularly in Italy, the phenomenon spread to Indonesia, including Medan, due to the influence of social media algorithms. The primary target audience is elementary school children, members of the Alpha generation.

Several school students in Medan City, especially at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School, have been exposed to the brainrot anomaly phenomenon, which is seen in children's interests that stimulate curiosity but also blur the line between fantasy and reality. This has been answered through simple observations and interviews conducted with several students attending Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan. Parents and educators also complained that consuming such content can weaken children's critical thinking and cause them to become accustomed to receiving information without clear logic. This habit is feared to impact the cognitive abilities and development of generation alpha children.

Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth how the role of interpersonal communication of teachers and analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors of the role of interpersonal communication of teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan in overcoming exposure to anomalous brainrot content in Generation Alpha. The novelty and the main challenge in this research lies in the research concept because there are not many similar studies that examine how teachers' interpersonal communication in the context of overcoming exposure to Brainrot Anomaly content, especially for the Alpha Generation in Elementary Schools in Medan City.

This research is expected to enrich the academic literature so that it can be used as a valid and relevant foundation and source of empirical data for further researchers , enriching the study of communication science, especially in the context of interpersonal communication science between teachers and students in facing the challenges of digital content in the current era and in the future . The results and discussions in this study are expected to provide insights and practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of interpersonal communication as an important role in overcoming the negative impacts of digital content and provide understanding and increase awareness of how to consume, analyze, create and evaluate quality digital content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is a process involving efforts by individuals or groups to influence others. This is accomplished through the clear delivery of information or messages, either verbally or through nonverbal cues such as body language or facial expressions. The primary goal is to ensure the message is received effectively, allowing the recipient to provide a response or feedback that allows for reciprocal interaction between the two parties (Saputra, 2023) .

Interpersonal Communication Theory

Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation or FIRO is a theory introduced by William Schutz in 1958. This theory emphasizes three types of basic human needs in interpersonal relationships, namely the need for inclusion, the need for control, and the need for affection. Inclusion refers to the human need to be recognized and known as an active participant in social interactions with others. Then, Control refers to the human desire to influence or make changes in their social environment, and Affection refers to the basic human need to feel warmth in interpersonal relationships, such as the feeling of being loved and cared for (Sarmiati, 2019) .

Brainrot Anomaly Content

The word "anomaly" literally means something that deviates from custom or norms. In this context, "brainrot" characters are considered unreasonable, disturbing, or absurd. They are presented with strange names, illogical behavior, and visual aesthetics that deviate from the normal narrative, thus being called anomalies. This demonstrates how the term "anomaly" is used to describe elements that are deliberately created and demonstrated through their absurdity (Maknun et al., 2025) .

Generation Alpha

The Alpha generation was first proposed by Mark McCrindle, a social researcher who stated that the Alpha generation is a continuation of Generation Z, which was just born in 2010 (Nabila, 2025) . In addition, the Alpha generation is the generation most familiar with digital technology and is considered the most intelligent generation compared to previous generations (Kuswanto et al., 2022). McCrindler also predicted that the Alpha generation cannot be separated from gadgets (Nimatuzahroh et al., 2022) .

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study uses a qualitative descriptive research method to examine in depth based on the interpersonal communication theory of *Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation* (FIRO) which prioritizes three aspects of personal needs , namely Inclusion, Control and Affection. Focusing on exploring students' awareness and understanding through interpersonal communication carried out by teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School in providing education related to digital content that is widely published and can be easily accessed by students from the alpha generation as individuals who influence the phenomena experienced. Qualitative research methods are research methods based on post-positivism philosophy, used to research natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning more than generalization (*Sugiyono, 2023*) . The subjects of this study were teachers as the main informants , the principal and students at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan as the complete informants . The object of this study focused on the role of teachers' interpersonal communication in avoiding and minimizing the negative impacts on exposure to brainrot anomaly content consumed by Generation Alpha from Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School. The data *collection* techniques used in this study were Triangulation, Interviews, Observation and Documentation. The data analysis techniques used were *Data* Collection , Data Reduction , Data Display and Conclusion Drawing . The data validity techniques used were *Credibility* , *Confirmability* and Authenticity .

RESEARCH RESULT

1) Interpersonal Communication of Teachers at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 36 Medan

Effective interpersonal communication between teachers and students can be a strategic tool to mitigate the negative impacts of exposure to Brainrot Anomaly content while simultaneously building children's awareness of absorbing all information contained in digital content. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages directly between individuals, involving both verbal and nonverbal aspects, with the goal of building understanding, trust, and emotional connections. Interpersonal communication occurs not only in formal classroom settings, but also in daily interactions outside the classroom, honing teachers' skills in active listening, responding, and creating a supportive atmosphere. Communication through body language, such as hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and the teacher's physical appearance, also plays a role in strengthening students' understanding of the teacher's message (Ginting

et al., 2019) . Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. Hasnah Rangkuti, S.Pd.I as the Principal of Muhammadiyah Elementary School 36 Medan, it is known that teachers and staff at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 36 Medan implement interpersonal communication by fulfilling the following things;

"Teachers at this school build emotional closeness with Generation Alpha students through empathetic, consistent, and relevant interpersonal communication related to their digital world, so that students feel understood, safe, and guided. So, teachers' real emotional presence and maintaining relationships by implementing good interpersonal communication, not only present as teachers, but as adults who can be trusted, so students can be more open about the things they experience ."

The results of the interview concluded that interpersonal communication implemented by teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan in a consistent manner, providing a full sense of empathy and tailored to the target plays a very important role and influences the behavior and emotions of students, thus providing a positive impact .

2) The Role of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication in Overcoming Exposure to Anomalous Brainrot Content at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School, Medan

The role of interpersonal communication carried out by teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan plays an important role in controlling students' understanding of the impact of brainrot content by implementing things that support providing education. Teachers as motivators at school in carrying out their duties of course do not Despite communication supported by existing knowledge and experience, however, there is the problem of the proliferation of brainrot content, and many students are exposed to it.

Teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School are also more active in implementing interpersonal communication with students exposed to the content, according to the results of an interview with the Principal, *"Teachers here apply interpersonal communication that is directed and full of empathy to provide control to all students, especially students who are exposed to the anomalous brainrot content. The communication carried out by teachers here is not with strict prohibitions, but through dialogue, agreement and guidance, where the implementation of this communication is carried out by agreeing on rules through dialogue with students, not unilateral instructions from the teacher."*

The principal certainly evaluates everything related to resources and activities at the school so that they can provide statements that are in accordance with reality. This is also further clarified by the results of an interview with Mrs. Ira Safitri, S.Pd.I as the vice principal and second grade teacher at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School , *"The teachers and I here are as consistent as possible in communicating well in a safe, open, and non-judgmental atmosphere to maintain relationships with students and guide them in sharing personal experiences, especially about online content that they like. It turns out that quite a few of our students are exposed to the anomalous brainrot content. With the interpersonal communication that we do, students are more courageous in expressing their experiences honestly and openly. So we as teachers can also help them understand the negative impacts of this content and then direct them to healthier digital attitudes and habits."*

Inclusion

The role of teacher interpersonal communication towards negative exposure of brainrot anomaly content becomes a means for students to fulfill the need for inclusion which has a significant drive to be recognized and involved in the social environment, because this interpersonal communication is established directly and consistently carried out until it reaches the expected thing. In this case, the author conducted an interview with Mrs. Nindya Kharismah, S.Pd as a class III (three) teacher and got the following results;

"I approach students exposed to this Anmali Brainrot content, but I don't judge or ostracize them. To mitigate the negative impact of exposure, it's important to assess their understanding and to see whether they've changed their attitudes and behavior, not just by responding with "Yes, Agree, or Nod."

Based on this statement, the author can conclude that based on the application of needs in the aspect of inclusion, the role of teacher interpersonal communication in dealing with exposure to anomalous content is not only to recognize the behavior of students who are exposed and then provide advice, but also to ensure that there is a response and change in behavior after the communication has taken place so that students continue to feel accepted by their surroundings.

Control

With the proliferation of digital content, teachers play a key role in controlling students, guiding them to avoid exposure to brainrot-related content. In this regard, the author conducted interviews with Ms. Ira Safitri, S.Pd.I and Ms. Kharisma Delviana, S.Pd., with the following findings:

"To control exposure to this content, I communicate by diverting students' focus so they don't become too attached and remember the content by seeking out more useful and insightful discussions or examples."

Mr. Dodi Canra, S.Pd.I also conveyed several ways that are concrete steps to carry out interpersonal communication in overcoming exposure to anomalous brainrot content, namely;

" *As teachers, we control the ability of students exposed to anomalous Brainrot content, not through prohibitions or punishment, but through building their awareness through emotional closeness, providing guidance, showing accurate data, and then firmly establishing boundaries between the digital world and everyday reality. Because we implement this, it's clear that students are able to control themselves, their behavior, and their attitudes, and gradually abandon such content to avoid more serious negative impacts."*

Based on the statement above, the author can conclude that the role of teacher interpersonal communication in controlling students who are exposed to brainrot anomaly content is not with things that can cause rebellion from students, but rather focuses on communication that is educational, persuasive and humanistic, namely with an intense emotional approach, diverting the focus of student interests, providing accurate data and facts and broadening insight, so as to break the attachment of students' minds to brainrot anomaly content that can have a negative impact on students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities.

Affection

Teachers employ an affectionate approach to their roles, and students receive compassion through interpersonal communication. The primary strategy employed is not rigid prohibition, but rather a genuine concern for students' feelings and emotional experiences.

This approach is carried out through persuasive steps such as understanding, advising, educating, monitoring, and strengthening students' emotional management by implementing warm and compassionate interpersonal communication. This is in accordance with the results of an interview with Mr. Muhammad Fauzan Khairi Mangunsong, S.Pd., as a teacher of Islamic studies, with the following interview results:

"To address such issues, the teachers and I here certainly demonstrate genuine concern for their feelings and experiences. The key is not to forbid them, but to understand, advise, educate, monitor, and strengthen emotional management."

3) Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Role of Teacher Interpersonal Communication in Overcoming Exposure to Anomalous Brainrot Content at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School, Medan

Supporting Factors

The main factor that supports the role of teacher communication in overcoming exposure to brainrot anomaly content in the alpha generation at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School is the teacher's ability in terms of knowledge and skills to convey messages, which is strengthened by harmonious interactions between teachers and students to build efficient communication. This was concluded based on the results of an interview with Mrs. Hamidah, S.Pd as a teacher and homeroom teacher I (one) with the following interview results;

"The main supporting factors are our knowledge and skills as teachers in conveying it, supported and collaborated with schools and parents, and access to adequate resources such as technology and an appropriate curriculum. Furthermore, our relationships as teachers with students must also be positive and harmonious. This way, interpersonal communication can be successfully implemented as a way to address exposure to the anomalous Brainrot content for the Alpha generation as students here. "

The success of interpersonal communication is also supported by sufficient resources, including appropriate curriculum, suitable technology, and active collaboration with the school.

The most dominant supporting factors are efficient learning time, family support, and motivation from the school environment. In addition, parental support at home in the form of guidance and supervision, a school environment full of togetherness, and appreciation for student achievements also strengthen children's self-confidence. Inhibiting factors in teacher interpersonal communication include student psychological barriers, lack of empathy in interactions between students, and overly active student characters (Royan, 2025) .

Inhibiting Factors

Factors inhibiting the role of teachers' interpersonal communication in addressing exposure to anomalous brainrot content arise from differences in technological understanding, especially among senior teachers who are not yet familiar with current digital content trends, coupled with a lack of parental supervision at home. This is based on the results of an interview with Ms. Agustina, S.Pd., a subject teacher, as follows:

"Inhibiting factors occur when supporting factors are ineffective. Here, many teachers are older and perhaps less familiar with the content. Teachers also can't fully verify whether students are watching at home, especially if parents aren't cooperative and attentive. However, in a school environment, we can ensure that students are not watching and are applying what they learn from the content both inside and outside the classroom."

While schools can implement strict controls during learning time, the biggest obstacle remains the inability of teachers to monitor students' digital activities outside of school hours, making close collaboration between the educational sector and families essential to protect students from the negative impacts of harmful digital content.

CONCLUSION

The role of interpersonal communication carried out by teachers at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan in a consistent manner, is an active step and plays an important role in overcoming the negative effects of exposure to brainrot content that is of interest to students in the alpha generation. The role of teacher interpersonal communication in overcoming exposure to brainrot anomaly content applies three aspects of personal needs adopted from the FIRO theory , namely 1) Inclusion, teachers recognize student behavior and ensure that exposed students do not feel isolated or judged and are then given the right direction and education. (2) Control, teachers ensure and monitor students consistently and evaluate student changes to leave watching brainrot anomaly content. (3) Affection, teachers prioritize care and affection to maintain interpersonal relationships so that students are more receptive to direction.

The main supporting factors lie in interpersonal relationships and competence through communication by teachers and the availability of resources and support from the school. Inhibiting factors in this case lie in the literacy gap between senior teachers and parents and the lack of full control by teachers over students' digital activities outside the school environment. Based on the data obtained and in-depth studies, it can be concluded that the Role of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication has an important influence in overcoming exposure to brainrot anomalous content in the alpha generation at Muhammadiyah 36 Elementary School Medan by recognizing and accepting, educating, controlling with full attention, and evaluating as an application of the FIRO theory which prioritizes the fulfillment of three personal needs in interpersonal communication practices.

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