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# Examining the Effects of Soft Skills Training and Academic Learning on Communication Skills Development: The Role of Self-Confidence

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**ABSTRACT**

Communication skills and self-confidence are important competencies for students in higher education, yet the roles of soft skills training and academic learning in their development warrant closer examination. This study investigated the relationships of soft skills training and academic learning with communication skills development and self-confidence among students at Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Jambi. The study used a quantitative explanatory approach involving active first-year students from the 2024 cohort in the Faculty of Administration. The population comprised 120 students distributed across four classes, of whom 97 respondents were selected using proportional random sampling. Data were obtained through a closed-ended five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered via Google Forms and analyzed using descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, and path analysis in SPSS version 26. Soft skills training ($\beta = 0.466$, $p < 0.001$) and academic learning ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.003$) were positively associated with communication skills development. In the self-confidence model, academic learning ($\beta = 0.352$, $p < 0.001$) and communication skills development ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.002$) showed significant positive associations, whereas the direct association with soft skills training was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.179$, $p = 0.084$). The models accounted for 48.5% of the variance in communication skills development and 54.2% in self-confidence. These findings suggest the value of integrating structured soft skills training and academic learning in student development programs while distinguishing their relationships with communication skills and self-confidence.

**Keywords**: Soft Skills Training, Academic Learning, Communication Skills Development, Self-Confidence

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is something that cannot be separated from life, because through education it can determine and demand the future and direction of one's life. Indeed, not everyone thinks so, but education remains the most important human need (Afriani & Setiyani, 2015). A person's talents and skills will be formed and honed through education and education is also a benchmark for a person's quality. Therefore, a person's education is expected to foster knowledge, morals, behavior, character and skills that can be applied in life both in society and in the world of work.

There are two levels of education, namely formal and non-formal education. Formal education is obtained through structured and planned educational activities or programs organized by government agencies, such as schools or universities (Anwar & Fikriyati, 2020). Non-formal education, on the other hand, is acquired through daily life activities unrelated to government institutions, such as self-study experiences through reading books and learning from the experiences of others.

There are two abilities inherent in students for life: soft skills and hard skills. These two abilities have different meanings: soft skills are abilities related to a person's personal behavior

and interactions with their environment, while hard skills are students' academic and vocational abilities (Apriyani et al., 2020). Therefore, these two skills are inseparable in developing student quality. However, education today still focuses solely on academic abilities, creating an imbalance between hard and soft skills. Hard skills become more dominant, thus under-utilizing the skills necessary for success and the competencies needed in industry and the workplace.

Meanwhile, we know that soft skills are also very important to develop for the future of students (Kusumaputri, 2018). Soft skills referred to here are abilities related to a person's personality in behaving and interacting with their environment. Soft skills are very suitable to be developed in a school environment because, in a school environment, students must be able to adapt, be able to overcome problems in life and interact or be able to live harmoniously with others.

Soft skills include motivational values, behavioral habits, character, and attitudes. These are possessed by everyone to varying degrees, which are influenced by the habits of thinking, speaking, acting, and behaving of each student (Ashari, 2018). As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 15 explains that "Vocational education is secondary education that prepares students to work in certain fields." In accordance with this explanation, we clearly know that students must be truly formed into students who are ready to face the world of work.

Therefore, in education at the vocational level, students are not only focused on knowledge (Rissa & Mujiyanti, 2022). Instead, it prioritizes vocational practice, so that the average graduate already has expertise in a field. However, students who already have special expertise in a field do not allow their soft skills to develop. Because they must focus more on vocational practice or academic abilities of students (Ullah, 2022). This will improve the personality of students, where if the mastery of soft skills is better, a person's personality will be stronger in facing work challenges and other life challenges (Rohman, 2020).

Students who are ready for work are identified through their individual conditions, including physical and mental readiness, experience, and willingness to undertake a job or activity (Sandroto, 2021). Students are considered ready to enter the workforce if they possess critical thinking skills, good communication skills, are responsible, have ambitions to progress, and strive to keep up with developments in their field of expertise (Asrizal et al., 2022).

One of the abilities or potentials that all students need to hone is the soft skills possessed by each student (Suardipa et.al, 2021). However, unfortunately, the development of these basic soft skills is not given enough attention in formal classroom learning (Rambe, 2018). This is feared to hinder the growth and development of students' emotional maturity, one of which is learning to speak or communicate well both in person and in public.

Therefore, the development of basic communication and speaking skills in elementary school students needs attention, considering that at this age, the character of interest and self-confidence is formed to do something that is considered interesting or enjoyable. Furthermore, Arumdani (2018) emphasized that extracurricular activities have a strong influence on student self-confidence, however, the implementation of extracurricular activities in schools has not been well implemented.

One of the forms of empowerment by developing the potential of individuals or groups to have better skills aims to improve the ability to meet the satisfaction and needs of their lives (Putra et.al, 2017). Likewise, the needs of students who are in the learning process need to be supported by the efforts of all parties as the next generation preparing for future challenges.

In the millennial generation, besides being related to digital technology, communication skills and courage to express opinions must be trained well, so that in cyberspace they do not conflict or violate legal provisions, namely the information, technology and information law (UU-ITE) (Bhakti & Safitri, 2017). The view that self-confidence must be cultivated from an early age is important as part of a person's mental and psychological development that is formed within

oneself and the environment, as stated by Gapi (2015) self-confidence is a person's belief in all potential within themselves and belief as the ability to be able to achieve various goals they want.

This opinion reflects that self-confidence fosters motivation and confidence in the abilities they have and of course as an expression of themselves or their role in their environment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Impact of Soft Skills Training

Soft skills are an important aspect of education, focusing on developing non-technical skills that support social interaction, communication, collaboration, and self-management. Soft skills encompass a range of skills, including communication, critical thinking, time management, emotional intelligence, and leadership. In an educational context, soft skills training is highly relevant because it not only helps students achieve better academic results but also prepares them for success in the workplace and social life (Turistiati, A. T. 2019).

### Academic Learning

Aligning learning behavior with learning objectives is crucial for achieving effective learning (Tus, 2020). In addition to developing knowledge, formal learning activities in higher education are intended to contribute to meeting societal needs (Chankseliani et al., 2021). In reality, societal demands do not always align with what educational institutions provide. The emerging problems in society do not always align with the material taught in lectures.

### Confidence

Self-confidence is an essential requirement for individuals to develop activities and creativity as a means of achieving success. However, self-confidence doesn't develop spontaneously. It develops through healthy interactions within an individual's social environment and is a continuous and ongoing process. Self-confidence doesn't just emerge; it takes place within a person through a specific process that develops it (Komara, 2016).

### Communication Skills Development

Communication is key to success in social and professional life. According to Hovland, communication is essentially a process of interaction between people through the exchange of information, both verbally and nonverbally, to change the behavior of others, or the recipient (Mulyana, 2017). Of course, when we talk about communication, we cannot separate it from the exchange of ideas or concepts aimed at changing the recipient's behavior (Mulyana, 2017). At first glance, communication is not considered important, because everyone assumes that communication occurs naturally every day, even from birth, and that humans communicate autodidactically. However, not every communication process goes smoothly; we often encounter differences in interpretation of the message being conveyed.

## 2. METHOD

### Research Model and Hypothesis

This study uses a quantitative approach with several variables to be tested for their influence, with numerical data results. Qualitative research methods are used to examine natural object conditions, where the researcher serves as the key instrument, data collection techniques are triangulated, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono 2016). The following is the research design.

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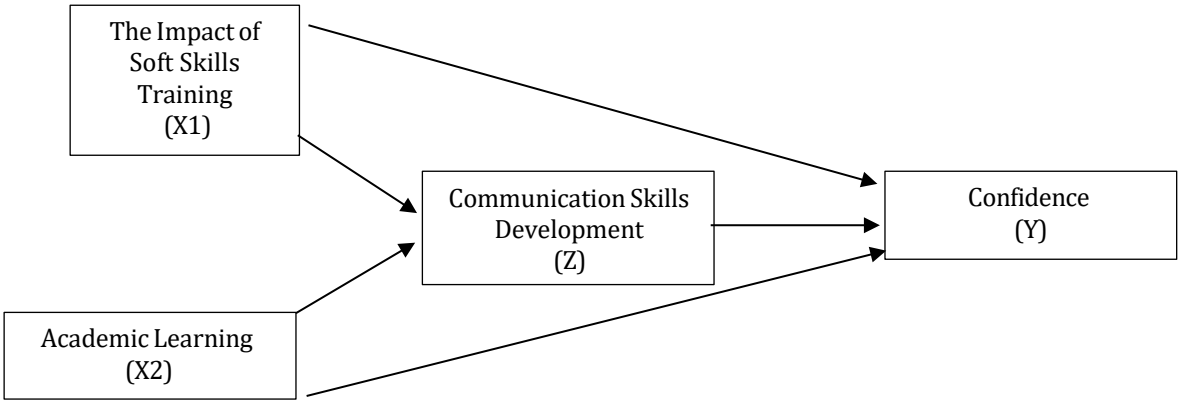



**Figure 1: Research Design**

Based on Figure 1 above, this study focuses on the variables of the Influence of Soft Skills Training (X1), Academic Learning (X2), Communication Skills Development (Z), and Self-Confidence (Y) on Students of Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Jambi. The main objective of the study is to explain the direct and indirect influence between variables through hypothesis testing using Path Analysis. According to Sugiyono (2017), descriptive explanatory research aims to describe phenomena and explain causal relationships between research variables. The research design is built based on theories of self-development, character formation, and relevant previous research, thus enabling researchers to construct a structural relationship model between research variables.

The data collection method uses a questionnaire, which will then be analyzed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) application to comprehensively test the relationship and influence between research variables.

**Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses**

| Hypothesis | Information |
|---|---|
| H1 | The Effect of Soft Skills Training has a positive and direct effect on the development of communication skills. |
| H2 | The Effect of Soft Skills Training has a positive and direct effect on the development of communication skills. |
| H3 | Academic Learning has a positive and direct effect on self-confidence. |
| H4 | Academic Learning has a positive and direct effect on self-confidence. |
| H5 | Communication skills development has a direct effect on self-confidence. |
| H6 | Soft Skills Training has a positive and indirect effect on the development of communication skills through self-confidence. |
| H7 | Academic Learning has a positive and indirect effect on the development of communication skills through self-confidence. |

Based on table 1 above, this study has 7 hypotheses. The hypothesis will test the direct effect of the Influence of Soft Skill Training (X1) on self-confidence (Y), the direct effect of soft skill training (X1) on the development of communication skills (Z), the effect of academic learning (X2) on the development of communication skills (Z), the Influence of academic learning (X2) on self-confidence (Y), the indirect effect of the influence of soft skills training (X1) on self-confidence (Y), through the development of communication skills (Z), and the indirect effect of academic learning (X2) on self-confidence (Y) through the development of communication skills (Z).

**Population and Sample**

The population in this study was all active new students of the 2024 cohort at the Faculty of Administration, Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Jambi, consisting of 4 classes with a total of 120 students. While the sampling technique used Proportional Random Sampling, and the sample obtained was 97 respondents.

**Data collection**

Data collection involved 97 active first-year students in the 2024 cohort of the Faculty of Administration, Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Jambi. A closed-ended questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, and responses were scored using a Likert scale with 5 alternative answers, namely: Strongly Agree: (SS), Agree: (S), Quite Agree: (CS), Disagree: (TS), and Strongly Disagree: (STS). Furthermore, the data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for The Social Science application or what is now better known as Statistical Product And Service Solutions (SPSS) version 26. Data analysis used in this study consisted of descriptive statistical data analysis, classical assumption tests, and path analysis.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULT

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is used to examine the direct and indirect influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. Hypotheses are accepted or rejected based on the following criteria: if the p-value is <0.05, then H0 is accepted, or the regression coefficient is declared significant. The results of the direct and indirect influence hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table:

**Table 2: Results of Indirect Hypothesis Testing**

**Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ,736a | ,542 | ,528 | 1,57614 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, ACADEMIC LEARNING, SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 4,016 | 1,193 | | 3,365 | ,001 |
| THE EFFECT OF SOFT SKILL TRAINING | ,160 | ,091 | ,179 | 1,747 | ,084 |
| ACADEMIC LEARNING | ,349 | ,095 | ,352 | 3,660 | ,000 |
| COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT | ,260 | ,080 | ,312 | 3,242 | ,002 |

a. Dependent Variable: Self-Confidence

To obtain the influence of error (e1), the formula used is:

$e1 = 1\text{-}R\,1^2 = \sqrt{1 - 0{,}542} = 0{,}736$

$Y = \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_4 X_2 + e_2$

$Y = 0{,}179\ X1 + -0{,}352\ X2 + 0{,}312\ Z + 0{,}736$

The coefficient of determination of 0.736 shows the direct influence of Academic Learning, Student Organizations, Self-Development, on the Y variable of Character Formation of 73.6% while 26.4% is influenced by other variables outside the model or this research.

**Table 3: Results of Direct Hypothesis Testing**

**Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ,697a | ,485 | ,475 | 1,99211 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), ACADEMIC LEARNING, SOFT SKILL TRAINING

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 2,422 | 1,488 | | 1,628 | ,107 |
| SOFT SKILL TRAINING | ,499 | ,104 | ,466 | 4,806 | ,000 |
| ACADEMIC LEARNING | ,351 | ,115 | ,296 | 3,051 | ,003 |

a. Dependent Variable: COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

To obtain the influence of error (e2), the formula used is:

$e2 = 1\text{-}\ R\,2^2 = \sqrt{1 - 0{,}485} = 0{,}697$

$Z = \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_4 X_2 + e_2$

$Z\ = 0{,}466\ X1 + 0{,}296\ X2 + 0{,}697$

The coefficient of determination of 0.697 shows the direct influence of the influence of soft skills training and academic learning on the variable Z of communication skills development of 69.7% while 31.3% is influenced by other variables outside the model or this research.

The influence of soft skills training has a positive and significant effect on self-confidence through the development of communication skills.

Indirect influence: $= X1 \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$

$= \beta 3 \times \beta 5$

$= 0{,}466 \times 0{,}312$

$= 0{,}146$

Academic learning has a positive and significant influence on the development of communication skills through self-confidence.

Indirect influence: $= X2 \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$

$= \beta 4 \times \beta 5$

$= 0{,}296 \times 0{,}312$

$= 0{,}092$

H1: The effect of soft skills training on self-confidence has a significance value of 0.084 < 0.05 and a Beta value of 0.179. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H1 is accepted.

H2: The effect of soft skills training on communication skills development has a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a Beta value of 0.466. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H2 is accepted.
H3: The effect of academic learning on self-confidence has a significance value of 0.352 > 0.05 and a Beta value of 0.352. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H3 is rejected.
H4: The effect of academic learning on communication skills development has a significance value of 0.296 > 0.05 and a Beta value of 0.003. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H4 is rejected.
H5: The effect of communication skills development on self-confidence has a significance value of 0.002 < 0.05 and a Beta value of 0.312. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H5 is accepted.
H6: The effect of soft skills training on self-confidence through communication skills development has a Beta value of 0.312. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H6 is accepted.
0.179 × 0.312 = 0.061
0.084 + 0.061 = 0.145
H7: The effect of academic learning on self-confidence through communication skills development has a Beta value of 0.312. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H7 is accepted.
0.352 × 0.312 = 0.110
0.000 + 0.110 = 0.110

**Path Analysis**

The following are the results of the interpretation of the path analysis which can be seen in table 4 below.

**Table 4: Path Analysis Results**

| Influence Between Variables | Influence | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Direct | Indirect | |
| Effect of X1 → Y | 0,179 | - | 0,310 |
| Effect of X1 → Z | 0,352 | - | 0,104 |
| Effect of X2 → Y | 0,312 | - | -0,010 |
| Effect of X2 → Z | 0,466 | - | 0,063 |
| Effect of Z → Y | 0,296 | - | 0,533 |
| Effect of X1 → Y → Z | 0,179 | 0,061 | 0,845 |
| Effect of X2 → Y → Z | 0,312 | 0,110 | 1,59 |

Based on the structure of this research model, the following empirical equation can be made.

$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_5 Z + e_1$

Y = 0,310 X1 + 0,645 X2 + 0,533 Z + 0,397

$Z = \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_4 X_2 + e_2$

Z = 0,645 X1 + 0,063 X2 + 0,538

The following are the results of path analysis in diagram form.

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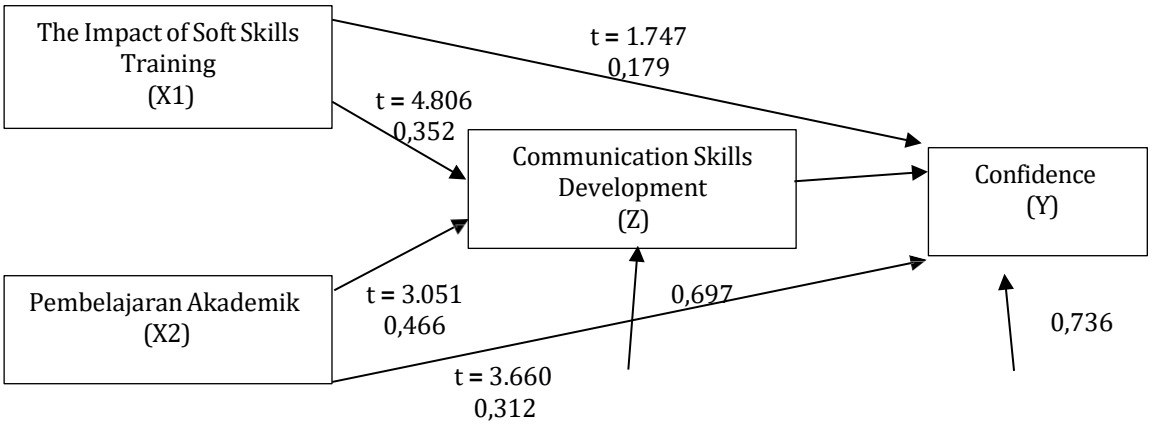



**Figure 2:** Path Analysis Result Model

In the picture 2 above it is explained
Coefficient of determination: R $m^2$ = 1- P e $1^2$ * P e $2^2$..... P $ex^2$.
Interpretation ($Rm^2$) determination as follows:
$Rm^2$ = 1- (0,$397^2$) (0,$538^2$) = 1- 0,045 = 0,95

Based on the coefficient of determination above, it shows a direct and indirect influence of 0.955, or 95.5%. In other words, the information contained in the data (95.5%) is explained by the model. Meanwhile, (4.5%) is explained by variables outside the model or this research.

## DISCUSSION

### The Effect of Soft Skills Training on Self-Confidence in Students at Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between Soft Skills Training and Self-Confidence at Setih Setio. Soft Skills Training has a strategic role in building student self-confidence, especially in Setih Setio students. The results of the hypothesis test that has been conducted with the path coefficient resulted in the conclusion that the training variable does not directly affect employee performance. The increase in training value did not directly affect employee performance. The findings and conclusions of this study are in line with previous research that training does not have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Training and Attitude partially do not have a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Lengkong et al., 2019). The researcher's findings on the relationship between these variables are that Setih Setio students not only have confidence in their fields, but they also have leadership skills and the ability to solve problems well.

### The Influence of Soft Skills Training on the Development of Communication Skills in Students of Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio

The results of this study indicate a positive and significant relationship between Soft Skills Training and Self-Confidence in Setih Setio Students. Soft Skills Training has a significant contribution in encouraging the development of communication skills of Setih Setio students. By developing soft skills in communication, including the ability to convey ideas clearly and listen well, individuals can ensure that their messages are understood correctly, prevent misunderstandings, and improve collaboration (Harlestiani 2017).

**Academic Learning on Self-Confidence in Students at Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio**

The results of this study state that there is a less influential relationship between academic learning and self-confidence in Setih Setio students. Academic learning has its own complexity in its contribution to the self-confidence of Setih Setio students. The results of this study indicate that the dominant factor in learning achievement is self-confidence in the form of self-love attitudes, self-understanding, positive goals, positive thinking, positive communication and self-control. From these attitudes affect student learning achievement which is reflected in the attitude of understanding, synthesis, skills and communication skills. Based on the results of this study it was found that there is an influence between self-confidence and learning achievement, meaning that the stronger or higher the student's self-confidence, the higher their learning achievement will be (Hamdan 2015).

**Academic Learning on the Development of Communication Skills in Students of Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio**

The empirical research results state that there is a lack of relationship between academic learning and the development of communication skills of Setih Setio students. Academic learning has complex potential in its contribution to the development of communication skills of Setih Setio students. Purwanti, 2017) revealed that communication in learning is a reciprocal relationship between teachers (educators) and students (pupils), in a teaching system. In everyday life, whether we realize it or not, communication is part of human life itself. Humans have been communicating with their environment since birth. The first movements and cries when they are born are a sign of communication. To establish a close sense of humanity, mutual understanding is needed among members in communication.

**Development of Communication Skills to Increase Self-Confidence in Students at Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio**

The empirical results of the study indicate a significant relationship between communication skills development and self-confidence among Setih Setio students. Communication skills development significantly contributes to building self-confidence among Setih Setio students. This study was motivated by the problem of most students still having poor public speaking skills. Meanwhile, as one of the subjects of education, students require public speaking skills every day. This study aims to describe the influence of self-confidence and communication skills on public speaking abilities (Tampubolon 2023).

**The Effect of Soft Skills Training on the Development of Communication Skills through Self-Confidence in Students at Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio**

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant influence between the influence of soft skills training on the development of communication skills through the self-confidence of Setih Setio students. The influence of soft skills training has a strategic role in shaping student self-confidence through the development of comprehensive communication skills. This type was chosen to obtain an in-depth picture and information regarding the existence or absence of a relationship between self-confidence accompanied by students' communication soft skills and learning outcomes. Researchers were directly involved in the entire research process from preparation to reporting the results. The presence of researchers is important to supervise the

data collection process, ensure procedures run according to plan, and conduct direct observations. This research used an instrument to collect data in the psychomotor domain in the assessment of competency abilities through communication practices as marketing offering products (Umi Lailatul Agustina 2024).

**Academic Learning on the Development of Communication Skills through Self-Confidence in Students of Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio**

Based on this research, empirically Student Organizations have a positive and significant influence on Self-Confidence through the Development of Communication Skills in Setih Setio Students. Academic learning has significant potential in shaping students' Self-Confidence through a comprehensive communication skills development process. This research is supported by Sukendar (2017:58) To grow and improve interpersonal relationships we must improve Trust in others is one of the factors so that oneself has the ability, skills, experience, in any field so that a person can be relied upon, honest and consistent. So it can be concluded that the purpose of this research has been achieved, namely to identify the influence of self-confidence on communication skills.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the influence of soft skills training has a significant effect on self-confidence and the development of communication skills in students at Setih Setio. This means that the higher the influence of soft skills training on a student, the higher the development of communication skills and the formation of self-confidence. As for other variables such as the influence of academic learning on self-confidence and the development of communication skills, it seems that the relationship between these variables is weak.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher provides suggestions, namely Based on the research findings, educators and student organizations at Setih Setio are advised to design a more comprehensive and sustainable student self-confidence strategy. It is necessary to carry out systematic integration between the academic curriculum and organizational activities with a focus on developing soft skills and student self-confidence, such as designing leadership training programs, self-development workshops, and field practice activities that provide direct experience in building creativity, courage to take risks, and problem-solving skills. Lecturers and student organizations should create a learning ecosystem that encourages students to actively reflect on themselves, develop personal potential, and build networks that support the growth of entrepreneurial character. In addition, it is necessary to develop a sustainable mentoring and assistance system, as well as design programs that allow students to directly apply entrepreneurial concepts in real contexts, so that they can form a strong, innovative entrepreneurial character and are ready to face the challenges of modern business dynamics.

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