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Strengthening Soft-Skills Through Community-Based Digital Training: Group Dynamics Among Community Participants in Rural Indonesia

Penguatan Keterampilan Soft Skills Melalui Pelatihan Digital Berbasis Komunitas: Dinamika Kelompok Pada Peserta Komunitas di Pedesaan Indonesia

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Abstract

Rural communities face challenges in developing collaborative skills amid digital transformation. This community service program aimed to support communication, collaboration, leadership, and self-management through community-based digital training. The five-day program involved 29 local community participants in Buton Tengah, Southeast Sulawesi, and included event management and digital marketing training, group projects, mentoring, leadership simulations, and reflection. Initial assessments described participant characteristics, while process evaluation used structured observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. Evaluation findings described increasingly active participation in discussions, task coordination, and teamwork. Qualitative findings identified adaptation to group activities, role negotiation, situational leadership, and reflective learning. The activities provided opportunities for participants to practice interpersonal skills through shared tasks and group interactions. These findings suggest that structured collaborative learning may support rural community capacity building. However, changes in individual skills were not measured through comparable pre-training and post-training scores, so the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of quantified improvement.

Keywords: Group Dynamics; Soft-Skills; Digital Training; Collaborative Learning; Rural Communities.

Abstrak

Masyarakat perdesaan menghadapi tantangan pengembangan keterampilan kolaboratif untuk menghadapi transformasi digital. Program pengabdian ini bertujuan mendukung komunikasi, kolaborasi, kepemimpinan, dan manajemen diri melalui pelatihan digital berbasis komunitas. Kegiatan dilaksanakan selama lima hari bersama 29 peserta komunitas lokal di Kabupaten Buton Tengah, Sulawesi Tenggara, melalui pelatihan manajemen acara dan pemasaran digital, proyek kelompok, pendampingan, simulasi kepemimpinan, serta refleksi. Asesmen awal digunakan untuk memetakan karakteristik peserta, sedangkan evaluasi proses dilakukan melalui observasi terstruktur, wawancara, dan diskusi kelompok terarah. Hasil evaluasi menggambarkan keterlibatan peserta yang semakin aktif dalam diskusi, koordinasi tugas, dan kerja sama kelompok. Temuan kualitatif mengidentifikasi proses adaptasi kelompok, negosiasi peran, kepemimpinan situasional, dan pembelajaran reflektif. Kegiatan memberikan kesempatan bagi peserta untuk mempraktikkan keterampilan interpersonal dalam aktivitas bersama. Temuan ini menunjukkan potensi pembelajaran kolaboratif terstruktur untuk mendukung pengembangan kapasitas masyarakat perdesaan, terutama dalam menciptakan ruang interaksi, komunikasi, dan pengalaman belajar bersama. Meskipun demikian, peningkatan keterampilan individual tidak diukur melalui perbandingan skor sebelum dan sesudah pelatihan.

Kata Kunci: Dinamika Kelompok; Keterampilan Lunak; Pelatihan Digital; Pembelajaran Kolaboratif; Masyarakat Perdesaan.

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BACKGROUND

The development of human resources in rural communities has become an increasingly pressing concern amid rapid digital transformation and evolving labor market demands. Although digitalization has expanded economic opportunities, rural populations continue to face structural barriers that constrain access to quality education, skills training, and decent employment. Disparities in digital access and skill acquisition may influence employment opportunities for rural populations, particularly as digital competencies increasingly shape labor market participation and occupational trajectories (Undale, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). The increasing complexity of digital and organizational environments also highlights the importance of leadership and collaborative capabilities for fostering innovation, coordination, and team synergy. Organizational challenges often include limited member initiative, low levels of openness and communication, and the need for leaders who can effectively empower their teams to collaborate toward shared goals (Tondang et al., 2025). These challenges highlight the growing importance of developing not only digital competencies but also interpersonal and collaborative capabilities among rural community members to support their participation in increasingly dynamic educational, organizational, and community contexts.

In Indonesia, these disparities are especially relevant in rural and outer-island regions, where limited digital infrastructure and restricted access to structured training programs continue to shape opportunities for community development. Studies on rural digital literacy highlight persistent gaps in readiness, access, and sustained training support that may hinder participation in emerging digital economies (Akbar & Wijaya, 2024). Consequently, community capacity-building initiatives may emphasize technical skill acquisition while providing fewer structured opportunities to cultivate interpersonal, communicative, and adaptive competencies that are also relevant to employability and community-based economic activities (Undale, 2021). Accordingly, strengthening soft-skills—such as communication, collaboration, leadership, adaptability, and self-regulation—is increasingly relevant to supporting community participation, workforce readiness, and local capacity development. Communication skills constitute an essential competency that supports organizational participation, professional development, educational activities, and social interaction (Aulia et al., 2023). Existing research also highlights the relevance of soft-skills to employability and career development (Heller & Kessler, 2022; Ovčina et al., 2023). In increasingly digitalized work environments, these human-centered competencies remain important for navigating complex and dynamic work settings (Kubátová et al., 2025). Within rural communities, interpersonal and collaborative competencies may also contribute to cooperation, social connectedness, and collective participation (Allen et al., 2021; Uvarina et al., 2021).

Importantly, soft-skills do not develop in isolation but emerge through social interaction and shared learning experiences. From social and educational psychology perspectives, group dynamics—encompassing communication patterns, role negotiation, interpersonal relationships, and influence processes—shape learning behaviours and adaptive capacities within collaborative settings (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Salas et al., 2023). Group interaction provides repeated opportunities for coordinating tasks, negotiating roles, and engaging in reflection, all of which are central mechanisms in the development of transferable interpersonal competencies (Bakoš & Strnádelová, 2022). Research on teamwork

and shared leadership further suggests that collaborative interaction supports gradual development of confidence, communication skills, and participatory decision-making over time (Curșeu et al., 2025; Tseng et al., 2024). These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding the role of collaborative learning within community-based training initiatives. Community-based digital training programs have increasingly been implemented in rural Indonesia as part of local capacity-building initiatives. While these programs can strengthen technical competencies, structured opportunities for collaborative learning and psychosocial skill development often remain limited. As a result, there is a need to clarify how group interaction and shared learning processes function as developmental mechanisms for soft-skills within socially embedded training environments.

Despite growing attention to soft-skills and collaborative learning, empirical research explicitly examining group dynamics as a central interactional process underlying soft-skills development in community-based digital training remains limited, particularly within rural community settings. Much of the existing literature emphasizes outcome-based soft-skills assessment, with less attention given to the interactional processes through which these competencies emerge, stabilize, and become transferable across contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how group dynamics shape soft-skills enactment among community participants involved in a community-based digital training program in Buton Tengah, Indonesia. Building upon this research gap, the present study offers a conceptual contribution by positioning group dynamics not merely as a contextual feature of collaborative learning, but as a central interactional process in the emergence of soft-skills during collaborative training. Rather than treating soft-skills as static individual traits captured by a single instrument, this study adopts a process-oriented perspective, proposing that soft-skills develop through sustained interaction, role negotiation, psychological safety, situational leadership, and reflective learning within group contexts.

Accordingly, soft-skills are conceptualized as emergent interactional competencies that develop through repeated participation in collaborative activity rather than as fixed individual traits. This perspective enables the examination of soft-skills as patterns of enactment within group processes—such as communication behaviors, teamwork roles, shared leadership, and reflective dialogue—through which competencies gradually become internalized and transferable beyond the training setting. Within this framework, the study examines how collaborative interaction, role negotiation, and reflection contribute to the gradual development and internalization of soft-skills in community-based digital training environments.

Based on this conceptual framework, this study aims to (1) describe group dynamics and soft-skills-related interactional indicators among community participants involved in the training program; and (2) examine how group dynamics shape the development of soft-skills through interaction, collaboration, and reflection.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

1. Program Description and Participants

This study was conducted within the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program, a community-based digital training initiative implemented in Buton Tengah, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The program was designed to strengthen participants' digital competencies and collaborative soft-skills through intensive group-based learning activities.

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The training was conducted over five consecutive days (9–13 December 2025) and integrated participant orientation, initial profiling, digital skills instruction, collaborative project development, mentoring, leadership development, and reflective learning sessions.

The program involved 29 adult community members from Buton Tengah, Southeast Sulawesi, aged 21–46 years, comprising male and female participants with diverse employment backgrounds. Participants were recruited from local communities in the Buton Tengah area and were considered eligible based on the program participation criteria. All eligible participants who completed the full training program and participated in the collaborative learning activities were included in the analysis. To protect confidentiality, all participants were anonymized using participant codes (P01–P29).

2. Preparation and Participant Orientation

The preparation stage involved coordination with local stakeholders and program organizers, participant recruitment, curriculum development, scheduling of training activities, and preparation of evaluation instruments. Training modules were designed to integrate digital skills development with collaborative learning experiences, while evaluation instruments were prepared to describe participants' interpersonal communication, teamwork tendencies, mental readiness, and group interaction patterns. The program began with participant orientation, including an introduction to program objectives, learning activities, and collaborative participation expectations, followed by initial participant profiling.

3. Initial Participant Profiling

At the beginning of the training program, following orientation, participants completed a series of structured self-assessment activities designed to describe their initial behavioral tendencies, teamwork role preferences, and perceived mental readiness. These assessments provided a descriptive overview of participants' characteristics and personal resources, serving as contextual information for interpreting their subsequent engagement and interaction during training activities.

Three assessment frameworks were used:

a. **DISC-based profiling** consisted of 24 forced-choice items representing Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance. Drawing conceptually on Marston (1928), this assessment was used to describe participants' interpersonal communication orientations and behavioral tendencies.
b. **Belbin Team Role–based profiling** consisted of eight sections in which participants distributed 10 points across statements representing different team-role preferences, including Shaper, Coordinator, Plant, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Implementer, Teamworker, and Completer Finisher. Informed by Belbin (2010), this assessment was used to describe participants' preferred roles and perceived contributions within collaborative group activities.
c. **Mental Strength–informed self-assessment** consisted of 50 items covering Fortitude, Confidence, Boldness, Messaging, Decision Making, and Goal Focus. Informed by the framework described by Mautz (2023), this assessment was used to describe participants' self-reported mental readiness and personal resources at the beginning of the program.

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These assessments were employed for descriptive participant profiling and to provide context for understanding participants' observed responses during training. Their results were not used to assign participants to groups, determine team roles, modify training activities, or evaluate program effectiveness through standardized score comparisons. The assessments were not intended for psychological diagnosis.

Information on the assessment sources, administered versions, and any linguistic modifications was documented to clarify their application in the Indonesian community context. The present evaluation did not undertake an independent psychometric validation of the instruments, and no claims of established reliability or construct validity for the specific administered versions were made.

4. Training Implementation

The Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program was implemented through structured learning activities designed to promote sustained interaction among participants. Following orientation and initial profiling, the training consisted of four components:

a. Digital skills training, covering digital entrepreneurship, digital marketing, artificial intelligence applications, productivity tools, public speaking, and personal branding.
b. Collaborative project development, where participants worked in groups to develop community-based digital projects through project-based learning activities.
c. Mentoring and facilitated group discussions, during which facilitators guided participants in role negotiation, problem solving, collaborative decision-making, and reflective learning.
d. Project presentation and feedback sessions, in which participants presented their group projects and received structured feedback from facilitators and peers.

These activities provided repeated opportunities for communication, teamwork, leadership, and collaborative problem solving, allowing group dynamics and participants' behavioral responses to be observed throughout the training process.

5. Program Monitoring and Qualitative Evaluation

Program monitoring was conducted throughout the training activities through structured field observations, facilitated discussions, and documentation of collaborative learning processes. Field observations were recorded using structured observation sheets covering five domains: activity engagement, situational leadership, teamwork, discipline and adherence to rules, and positive behavioral conduct. The observation sheets included 17 behavioral indicators and narrative notes documenting participants' engagement, communication, leadership, cooperation, and responses to collaborative activities. These records provided observational evidence for the qualitative evaluation of group dynamics.

In addition to field observations, qualitative evaluation was conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to explore participants' experiences of communication, collaboration, role negotiation, leadership, and reflective learning during the training activities. These activities provided contextual information about participants' experiences and the collaborative processes documented during the program.

Observational records and participant accounts were examined descriptively to identify recurring patterns of engagement, communication, teamwork, role negotiation, leadership, and reflective learning. The available evaluation records were reviewed and organized into five thematic categories representing the collaborative processes described in

the Results and Discussion section. The analysis focused on participants' observed responses and interactional patterns, including situational variations in engagement and collaboration, rather than establishing causal effects or lasting changes in individual soft-skills.

6. Integration of Initial Profiles and Program Evaluation Findings

The initial participant profiles provided descriptive information about participants' behavioral tendencies, teamwork role preferences, and perceived mental readiness. These profiles served as contextual references for interpreting participants' engagement, communication, collaboration, and group dynamics documented through observations, interviews, and focus group discussions during the training.

Together, these sources provided complementary information about participants' initial characteristics and their observed responses throughout the program. Although the evaluation did not involve comparable pre-test and post-test measurements, ongoing observations enabled the documentation of situational behavioral responses and interactional patterns during training, without establishing quantified improvement, causal effects, or the long-term persistence of these responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Preparation and Participant Orientation

The implementation of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program began with a preparation and participant orientation stage conducted on the first day of the program. This stage consisted of participant registration, the opening ceremony, institutional remarks, and an orientation session introducing the objectives and structure of the training program.

Following the opening session, participants took part in a Personal Strength Assessment activity facilitated by the training team. This activity served as an initial orientation process to help participants recognize their individual strengths and work tendencies before participating in collaborative learning activities. The assessment also introduced participants to the interactive and group-based learning approach that would be used throughout the five-day program.

The orientation stage was designed to ensure that participants understood the overall learning process, including technical training sessions, practical assignments, collaborative activities, competency assessment, and the capacity-building program implemented on the final day. This stage established the initial context for participant interaction before entering the technical training sessions.

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Figure 1. Registration Process, Opening Ceremony, and Participant Orientation.

2. Technical Training Implementation

The technical training component was implemented over the first three days of the program and focused on strengthening participants' competencies in event management and digital marketing through a combination of theoretical instruction, practical exercises, and assignment-based learning activities (Siddiqui et al., 2023; Toyon, 2021). The implementation followed a sequential structure in which participants received conceptual instruction before progressing to practical application and competency preparation.

2.1. Event Management Training

The event management training was introduced during the first day and continued through the third day of the program. The training covered the fundamental principles of event planning, event organization, coordination mechanisms, and implementation procedures required in professional event management practice.

During the second and third days, the event management sessions focused on deeper exploration of technical material and the application of event management concepts through structured assignments and practical exercises. Participants were required to complete individual tasks that were subsequently monitored and reviewed by the training facilitators. The monitoring process allowed facilitators to observe participants' progress in applying the concepts introduced during the training sessions.

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Figure 2. Event Management Training and Technical Instruction Activities.

2.2. Digital Marketing Training

Digital marketing training was implemented across the first and second days of the program. The sessions introduced participants to digital marketing concepts and communication strategies relevant to contemporary digital promotion practices.

The second day emphasized advanced digital marketing training, allowing participants to engage with more in-depth material and practical learning activities. The training was integrated with assignment-based exercises that required participants to apply digital marketing concepts within structured learning tasks.

Throughout the digital marketing sessions, participants worked within the collaborative learning environment established during the orientation stage, enabling interaction and discussion during the learning process.



Figure 3. Digital Marketing Learning and Practical Activities.

2.3. Broadcast System Practicum

One of the central practical components of the technical training was the Broadcast System Practicum conducted on the second day of the program. This practicum integrated event management and digital marketing training through hands-on implementation activities.

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The practicum provided participants with opportunities to apply the technical material that had been delivered during previous sessions. The activity functioned as a practical bridge between conceptual understanding and implementation-oriented learning, allowing participants to engage directly with technical procedures and operational workflows within the training environment (Toyon, 2021).



Figure 4. Practical Implementation of The Broadcast System Training.

2.4. Individual Assignment Monitoring and Competency Preparation

The third day of the program focused on individual assignment monitoring, assignment submission, and review of participants' work. Facilitators conducted systematic monitoring of participants' assignments, followed by structured review sessions designed to provide feedback and prepare participants for the competency assessment stage.

The review process was conducted through direct monitoring sessions and online review activities, enabling participants to refine their understanding of event management and digital marketing concepts before the competency examination conducted on the fourth day. This stage represented the transition from the technical training phase toward competency assessment and capacity-building activities implemented in the subsequent stages of the program.



Figure 5. Monitoring of Individual Assignments and Review Sessions.

The implementation of these technical training activities established the learning context in which participants engaged in repeated collaborative tasks, structured assignments,

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and guided interaction throughout the first three days of the program. The competency assessment and capacity-building activities that followed provided the continuation of this implementation process and are described in the subsequent sections.

3. Competency Assessment Implementation

The fourth day of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program was dedicated to the competency assessment stage, which functioned as the formal assessment component following the completion of the technical training sessions. This stage consisted of competency examinations in event management and digital marketing, conducted for participants who had completed the previous training and assignment activities.

The competency assessment was implemented through structured practical examinations supervised by competency assessors. The examination process was designed to assess participants' ability to apply the knowledge and skills developed during the technical training sessions. Participants completed assessment activities related to event management and digital marketing according to the competency standards established within the training program.

The implementation of the competency assessment represented the transition from the learning and practice phase toward structured performance assessment. The assessment process was organized systematically, including participant attendance, examination sessions, documentation activities, and the closing evaluation session conducted at the end of the fourth day.

Following the completion of the competency examination, the program concluded the assessment stage with an evaluation and testimonial session. This session provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences throughout the technical training process before proceeding to the capacity-building activities conducted on the fifth day.



Figure 6. Event Management and Digital Marketing Competency Assessment Activities.

4. Capacity building and collaborative learning activities

The final day of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program was dedicated to capacity building and collaborative learning activities. Unlike the previous sessions, which focused primarily on technical competencies, the activities on the fifth day emphasized self-awareness, interpersonal interaction, collaborative learning, leadership, and reflective participation (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Salas et al., 2023). The sequence of activities consisted of Self Awareness: Strength and Workstyle Mapping, Team Dynamics, Growth Mindset, Leadership Simulation, Self Management, Final Project (Egg Drop Challenge), and Commitment and Closing Programme.

4.1. Self Awareness: Strength and Workstyle Mapping

The first activity focused on helping participants identify their personal strengths and workstyle tendencies. Through guided reflection and structured assessment activities, participants explored their individual characteristics and work preferences within a learning and collaboration context. This session served as an introductory stage for the subsequent collaborative activities by providing participants with a framework for understanding individual differences in group settings.

4.2. Team Dynamics

The Team Dynamics session introduced participants to collaborative interaction processes within groups. Participants engaged in structured group activities that required communication, coordination, role distribution, and collective task completion (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Salas et al., 2023). The session was designed to provide direct experience of group interaction and collaborative problem solving within a facilitated learning environment.

This activity represented one of the central collaborative components of the capacity-building program because it provided opportunities for participants to engage in sustained interpersonal interaction before participating in leadership and project-based activities.

4.3. Growth Mindset

The **Growth Mindset** session focused on learning orientation, adaptation, and reflective thinking during collaborative activities. Participants took part in facilitated discussions and reflective exercises related to learning challenges, personal development, and continued improvement. The session complemented the previous collaborative activities by emphasizing reflection as part of the learning process.

4.4. Leadership simulation

The Leadership Simulation session involved structured collaborative activities requiring participants to coordinate group tasks, communicate within teams, and complete collective challenges. The simulation activities were implemented through group-based exercises that required participants to organize team activities and manage collaborative responsibilities within limited time conditions (Salas et al., 2023).

4.5. Self management

The Self Management session focused on personal regulation, responsibility, and individual readiness within collaborative work contexts. Participants engaged in facilitated

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Volume 8 No. 2 July – December 2026, Pages 258-279
https://doi.org/10.30872/plakat.v8i2.30214

reflection activities related to time management, personal responsibility, and participation during group-based learning activities. The session was implemented prior to the final collaborative project and functioned as preparation for the concluding group challenge.

4.6. Final Project: Egg Drop Challenge

The capacity-building program concluded with the Final Project: Egg Drop Challenge, a collaborative group activity requiring participants to work together in designing, constructing, and presenting a collective solution within a limited time period. The activity integrated communication, coordination, planning, and collaborative problem solving into a single practical challenge (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Salas et al., 2023)

Participants worked in groups throughout the project process, including planning, material preparation, implementation, testing, and presentation of project outcomes. The activity represented the culmination of the collaborative learning process implemented during the capacity-building stage and served as the final group-based activity before the closing session of the program.

The capacity-building activities on the fifth day completed the implementation phase of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program by integrating individual reflection, collaborative interaction, leadership practice, and project-based group activities. These implementation activities provided the context for the monitoring and evaluation processes presented in the following section.



Figure 7. Capacity Building and Collaborative Learning Activities

5.1 Evaluation of Collaborative Learning Participation

Collaborative learning participation was monitored throughout the implementation of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program through direct observation during group discussions, project-based activities, mentoring sessions, and collaborative assignments. The monitoring focused on participants' engagement in collaborative tasks, initiative during group activities, and consistency of participation across different stages of the program.

The observation process indicated that participant engagement increased progressively throughout the training activities. During the initial stage of collaborative learning, participation was relatively limited, with many participants showing hesitation in

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Volume 8 No. 2 July – December 2026, Pages 258-279
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initiating discussion and contributing actively during group activities. As collaborative tasks continued, participants became increasingly involved in group discussions, task coordination, and collaborative learning activities, indicating a gradual increase in active participation during the implementation process.

These monitoring findings suggest that collaborative learning participation developed progressively across the program implementation stages (Salas et al., 2023). The observed increase in participant engagement provided an empirical basis for the subsequent evaluation of group dynamics and collaborative interaction patterns presented in the following sections.

5.2. Descriptive Profile of Group Dynamics

Initial assessments were conducted to describe participants' teamwork role preferences, interpersonal communication orientations, perceived mental readiness, and relational characteristics at the beginning of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program. These profiles provide an overview of participants' initial characteristics and contextual information for understanding their subsequent experiences in collaborative learning activities.

5.2.1. Team Role Profile

The initial Belbin Team Role–based assessment showed that Teamworker (34.5%) was the most prevalent role preference, followed by Implementer (27.6%) and Coordinator (19.3%). Shaper accounted for 10.2%, while other roles represented 8.4% of the aggregated distribution.

Table 1. Aggregated Distribution of Team Roles Based on The Belbin Team Role–Based profile (N = 29)

Team Role	Percentage (%)
Team worker	34.5
Implementer	27.6
Coordinator	19.3
Shaper	10.2
Others	8.4

Note. Percentages Represent the Aggregated Proportion of Dominant Team Roles Identified Across Participants.

The distribution indicates that cooperation-oriented and task-focused roles were relatively prominent in participants' initial teamwork preferences. This pattern reflects participants' reported role orientations within group settings, consistent with the relevance of differentiated team roles in collaborative processes (Curșeu et al., 2025; Tseng et al., 2024). Overall, the initial profile indicates a stronger preference for cooperative and task-execution roles, while roles involving more directive group leadership were less frequently represented.

5.2.2. Interpersonal Style and Communication Orientation

The initial DISC-based profiles showed higher mean scores for Steadiness (M = 18.2, SD = 2.4) and Influence (M = 16.5, SD = 2.8), suggesting relatively prominent preferences for supportive and relationship-oriented communication. Comparatively lower Dominance scores indicated a less pronounced preference for directive interpersonal approaches. These findings describe participants' reported communication orientations at the beginning of the program. Overall, the profiles suggest a relationship-oriented communication tendency, while

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more directive communication styles should be understood within the context of participants' interpersonal interactions.

5.2.3. Mental readiness profile

The initial Mental Strength–informed self-assessment showed the highest mean scores for goal focus (M = 18.4, SD = 2.3) and mental resilience (M = 17.9, SD = 2.6), followed by self-confidence (M = 16.7, SD = 2.9). Decision-making readiness (M = 15.2, SD = 3.0) and boldness (M = 14.9, SD = 3.1) showed comparatively lower scores.

Table 2. Aggregated Mental Readiness Profile of Participants

Mental Strength Dimension	Mean	SD
Mental Resilience	17.9	2.6
Goal Focus	18.4	2.3
Self-Confidence	16.7	2.9
Boldness	14.9	3.1
Decision Making	15.2	3.0

Note. Higher scores indicate stronger mental readiness.

This pattern suggests that self-reported goal orientation and mental resilience were relatively more prominent than boldness and decision-making readiness within the assessed dimensions (Mautz, 2023). Accordingly, initiative-taking and readiness to make decisions represent relevant aspects to observe during collaborative activities, without implying deficits in participants' abilities.

5.2.4. Interpersonal relations and group dynamics

The initial assessment of relational indicators showed variation across interpersonal relations, group cohesion, and participatory decision-making.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of interpersonal relations and group dynamics

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Interpersonal Relations	1.00	5.00	2.68	0.74
Group Cohesion	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.69
Decision Making	1.00	5.00	2.41	0.81

Note. Variables were measured using a 5-point scale.

Group cohesion had the highest mean score (M = 3.12, SD = 0.69), followed by interpersonal relations (M = 2.68, SD = 0.74) and participatory decision-making (M = 2.41, SD = 0.81). This distribution indicates differences in participants' initial relational characteristics, with participatory decision-making showing the lowest mean among the three indicators. These findings provide a descriptive overview of the relational context in which subsequent collaborative activities took place. Accordingly, participants' involvement in shared decision-making represents a relevant aspect to consider when examining group dynamics during training.

Overall, the initial profiles indicated relatively prominent preferences for cooperative roles, task execution, relationship-oriented communication, and goal focus. Meanwhile, comparatively lower scores in boldness, decision-making readiness, and participatory decision-making highlight aspects warranting attention during collaborative learning, particularly initiative-taking, willingness to express opinions, involvement in shared decision-making, and the distribution of group responsibilities. These aspects provide relevant points

of reference for interpreting subsequent qualitative evaluation findings, without presuming changes in participants' competencies that have not been empirically established.

5.3. Qualitative evaluation of collaborative processes

Qualitative evaluation was conducted through structured field observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions during the implementation of the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program. Field observations were documented using structured observation sheets covering participants' engagement, situational leadership, teamwork, discipline, and behavioral conduct. The qualitative findings were organized into five interconnected themes describing the collaborative learning processes observed and reported throughout the training activities (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2023; Toyon, 2021). Overall, the findings suggest that collaborative participation unfolded through a gradual interactional process involving role negotiation, harmony maintenance, situational leadership, confidence development, and reflective learning.

5.3.1. Adaptation to group work and role negotiation

At the initial stage of the collaborative learning activities, participants generally demonstrated cautious and uncertain participation. Group interaction was characterized by hesitation in taking initiative, expressing opinions, and assuming responsibility within collaborative tasks. Many participants initially adopted a passive role while observing the responses and participation of other group members before becoming actively involved in the learning process.

"At the beginning, we were just looking at each other. No one really dared to start." (P02)

"I wanted to help organize things, but I was afraid people would think I was being bossy." (P09)

As collaborative tasks progressed, participants gradually adapted through informal discussion and shared working experiences. Rather than being formally assigned, roles emerged organically based on task demands and individual tendencies. This process gradually increased role clarity and encouraged more active participation in group activities.

"Over time, it became clear who handled technical tasks and who communicated with the team." (P14)

"Once I knew my part, I felt more confident to get involved." (P21)

These findings suggest that adaptation to collaborative learning occurred through gradual interpersonal adjustment and role negotiation rather than through immediate or formally structured role allocation (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Salas et al., 2023).

5.3.2. Harmony orientation and conflict avoidance

A prominent interactional pattern observed during collaborative learning was participants' strong orientation toward maintaining interpersonal harmony. Participants frequently moderated their expressions and avoided direct disagreement in order to preserve positive group relationships.

"There was something I wanted to say, but I held back. I was afraid it would make things uncomfortable." (P04)

"Sometimes I don't really agree, but I just go along with it." (P11)

Plakat: Jurnal Pelayanan Kepada Masyarakat
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Volume 8 No. 2 July – December 2026, Pages 258-279
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Conflict avoidance was particularly evident during group decision-making, where consensus often required extended discussion because participants prioritized relational stability over rapid resolution.

"Decisions take a long time because everyone is trying not to hurt anyone's feelings." (P08)

"The group stays peaceful, but sometimes the work gets done slowly." (P17)

This interactional orientation supported group cohesion during collaborative activities, although it also contributed to relatively cautious communication patterns when participants encountered differences of opinion (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Newman et al., 2017).

5.3.3. Situational leadership emergence

Leadership within collaborative groups emerged situationally rather than through formal assignment. Participants described leadership as temporary and task-dependent, with different members assuming leadership roles according to the demands of specific activities.

"We never officially chose a leader. But when things got confusing, someone would usually step forward." (P07)

"Sometimes I take the lead, but for other tasks, someone else does." (P13)

Leadership was primarily viewed as a functional response to coordination needs, particularly during periods of uncertainty or time pressure.

"When the deadline is close, someone has to step in." (P10)

"Even when organizing things, you have to be gentle." (P19)

These findings indicate that leadership during the training program was distributed and fluid, emerging when required and receding once coordination and task clarity had been established (Tondang et al., 2025; Salas et al., 2023).

5.3.4. Development of confidence and expressive skills

Repeated participation in collaborative activities contributed to gradual changes in participants' confidence and expressive participation. Many participants described themselves as initially reluctant to speak because of concerns about making mistakes or expressing incorrect ideas.

"At the beginning, I mostly stayed quiet. I was afraid of saying something wrong." (P06)

With continued involvement in collaborative discussions and project-based activities, participants became increasingly willing to express ideas and contribute to group interaction.

"At first I just listened, but slowly I tried to speak up." (P18)

"Now, if I have an idea, I'm more willing to share it, even though I still feel nervous." (P22)

Participants also linked increased confidence to clearer role definition within their groups.

"Once I knew my responsibility, I felt more confident explaining things to the group." (P14)

Although participants became more active contributors, hesitation in expressing disagreement remained evident, particularly in situations where maintaining interpersonal harmony was considered important.

"When there's a different opinion, I still hesitate about how to say it." (P09)

These findings suggest that confidence and expressive participation developed incrementally through repeated collaborative experience rather than through isolated training sessions alone (Aulia et al., 2023; Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Newman et al., 2017).

5.3.5. Reflective learning and soft-skills awareness

Reflective processes conducted during and after collaborative activities enhanced participants' awareness of the importance of communication, teamwork, and interpersonal interaction. Initially, many participants focused primarily on completing technical tasks and paid relatively little attention to communication processes within their groups.

"At first, I thought as long as the task was done, communication didn't really matter." (P01)

Through reflection and group discussion, participants began linking group outcomes to communication and collaboration patterns.

"After discussing it together, I realized the problem wasn't the task, but how we communicated." (P16)

Participants also identified listening, clear expression, and mutual respect as important competencies developed through collaborative learning experiences.

"I realized that listening to others is also a skill." (P24)

This growing awareness extended beyond the immediate training context, as participants increasingly perceived these competencies as relevant to future work and social environments.

"I started thinking that these skills will be useful at work too, not just here." (P27)

Participants nevertheless emphasized that continued practice was necessary for consistent application of these skills.

"I understand their importance now, but I still need to get used to practicing them." (P12)

These findings indicate that reflective learning functioned as a mechanism through which participants interpreted their collaborative experiences and developed greater awareness of communication, teamwork, and other soft-skills relevant beyond the training setting (Duckworth et al., 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2023; Stomski & Jensen, 2021).

Overall, the qualitative evaluation indicates that collaborative learning processes during the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program were characterized by gradual adaptation, socially negotiated participation, situational leadership, progressive confidence development, and reflective learning. Together, these themes provide a process-based explanation of how collaborative interaction unfolded during the implementation of the training program.

5.4. Integration of monitoring findings

The initial quantitative profiles and qualitative evaluation findings provided complementary perspectives on participants' characteristics and collaborative experiences during the Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program. The initial assessments described participants' teamwork preferences, communication orientations, mental readiness, and relational characteristics, while ongoing observations, interviews, and focus group discussions documented how participants engaged in collaborative activities. Considering these findings together provides a more comprehensive understanding of participants' starting characteristics and the interactional processes observed throughout the training.

5.4.1. Integrated group dynamics profile

The initial profiles indicated relatively prominent preferences for Teamworker and Implementer roles, Steadiness- and Influence-oriented communication, and goal-focused

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Volume 8 No. 2 July – December 2026, Pages 258-279
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engagement. Meanwhile, comparatively lower scores in boldness, decision-making readiness, and participatory decision-making highlighted aspects warranting attention during collaborative activities. These characteristics provided a descriptive context for understanding participants' initial orientations toward teamwork, communication, and group participation.



Figure 8. Descriptive Overview of Participants' Initial Behavioral Orientations, Teamwork Role Preferences, and Mental Readiness.

Figure 8 summarizes the initial assessment profiles, illustrating the diversity of participants' teamwork preferences, interpersonal orientations, and perceived mental resources. These characteristics provide a reference for interpreting the collaborative experiences documented during training, particularly those involving initiative, role negotiation, communication, and shared decision-making.

5.4.2. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings

The qualitative findings provided further insight into how participants engaged in collaborative activities in relation to the characteristics described in their initial profiles. Although cooperation-oriented roles and relationship-focused communication were relatively prominent in the initial assessments, observations and participant accounts revealed that group interaction initially involved hesitation in expressing opinions, taking initiative, and assuming leadership responsibilities. Participants also described a tendency to maintain interpersonal harmony, sometimes resulting in cautious communication and prolonged group decision-making.

As training activities progressed, participants demonstrated more active involvement in discussions, clearer task coordination, and greater willingness to contribute ideas. Leadership emerged situationally according to task demands, while repeated collaboration and reflection encouraged participants to recognize the importance of communication, shared responsibility, and teamwork. These observed and reported responses illustrate how collaborative participation gradually unfolded within the training environment, particularly in areas identified as relevant in the initial profiles.

The integration of these findings suggests that structured collaborative activities provided opportunities for participants to practice interpersonal competencies and explore different forms of participation beyond their initially reported preferences. Rather than indicating immediate or uniform improvement, the findings document emerging behavioral responses, situational adjustments, and growing awareness during the learning process. The

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quantitative and qualitative findings therefore complement one another at the descriptive level without establishing direct statistical relationships between individual profiles and subsequent behaviors.

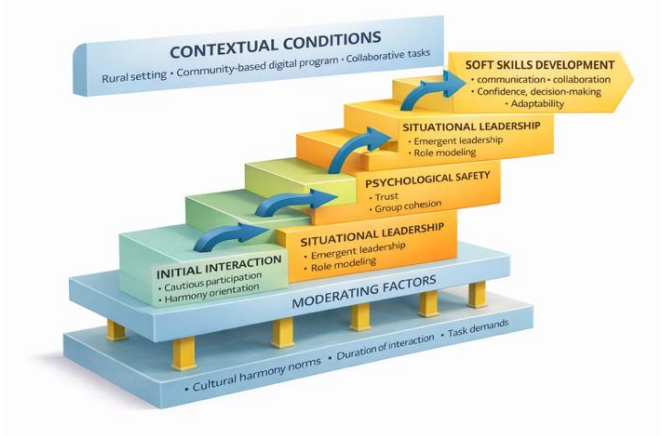

Figure 9. Interpretative Model of Collaborative Learning Processes in Community-Based Digital Training.

Figure 9 illustrates the interactional processes identified through the program evaluation, including group adaptation, role negotiation, situational leadership, communication, and reflective learning. The model represents how these processes were observed and experienced during collaborative activities, offering a contextual explanation of participants' engagement rather than a statistically tested causal model.

Overall, the findings highlight the relevance of group dynamics in creating opportunities for participants to express and practice collaborative soft-skills. The evaluation documented observable variations in participation and interaction during the program, although the extent to which these responses persisted beyond the training remains unknown. Interpretation is also subject to potential facilitator involvement and social-desirability influences on participants' accounts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Digital Talent Buton Tengah Program demonstrated how structured collaborative learning activities provided opportunities for community participants to practice communication, teamwork, leadership, and reflective learning. Throughout the five-day program, monitoring and qualitative evaluation documented a gradual progression from initially cautious participation toward more active discussion, task coordination, role negotiation, and situational leadership. Participants also reported greater awareness of the importance of interpersonal competencies in collaborative activities.

The initial quantitative profiles identified relatively prominent cooperation-oriented teamwork preferences, relationship-focused communication, and goal orientation, alongside comparatively lower scores in boldness, decision-making readiness, and participatory decision-making. These findings provided a starting context for understanding participants' characteristics, while qualitative observations and accounts documented their responses during training. Together, the findings indicate that collaborative activities offered opportunities to stimulate initiative, expressive participation, shared responsibility, and reflective awareness. These responses were observed within the program context, although their longer-term consistency and transfer to other settings were not assessed.

Based on these findings, future community-based digital training programs should integrate technical instruction with structured group activities, opportunities for shared decision-making, situational leadership, mentoring, and reflection. Particular attention may be directed toward encouraging participants to express opinions, take initiative, and participate in collective decisions while maintaining constructive interpersonal relationships. Continued practice and follow-up activities are recommended to support the application of these competencies beyond the training environment. Future evaluations may also incorporate repeated assessments and longer-term monitoring to examine the development and sustainability of participants' soft-skills more systematically.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research involving human participants. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their information, and their right to withdraw from the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews were conducted. Participant identities were anonymized using initials in the reporting of the findings.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct of the program or the writing of this article.

TRANSPARENCY OF DATA

The data underlying this study consist of interview transcripts containing potentially identifiable information and are therefore not publicly available. All participants provided written informed consent before taking part in the study. Although the study did not receive formal approval from an institutional ethics committee, participants were informed about the study's purpose, the data collected, and their right to refuse or withdraw without consequences. Confidentiality was protected through de-identification, restricted data storage, and reporting that does not reveal participants' identities. Relevant de-identified excerpts may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participant confidentiality and applicable ethical and institutional requirements.

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The authors used generative artificial intelligence only to check the English grammar of the manuscript. AI was not used to write content, generate or analyze data, or draw conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contribute for this article.

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