



## Communication Psychology Training on Safe WhatsApp Usage for Santri UMKM at Islamic Boarding Schools

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**Abstract:** WhatsApp is one of the most widely used messaging platforms, offering fast and simple communication. Among its active users are students from Islamic boarding schools (santri), including those involved in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). However, despite its convenience, many users lack awareness regarding digital safety and privacy, exposing them to cyber risks such as phishing, scams, and identity theft. In Nusukan, Surakarta, this issue is particularly relevant for santri who rely on WhatsApp for both academic and business communication. This community service initiative was conducted at Al-Mukminun Islamic Boarding School in Nusukan, Surakarta, with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of safe WhatsApp usage among MSME santri. The program consisted of counseling sessions, which included lectures and interactive discussions tailored to the participants' needs. Key topics included how to adjust privacy settings, identify suspicious links and messages, protect personal data, and recognize common cyber threats. Participants responded positively to the training. Feedback showed that 80% of them reported they would avoid clicking unknown links in messages. Another 80% stated they would refrain from sharing personal information with strangers. Furthermore, 80% expressed their commitment to regularly updating the WhatsApp application to ensure optimal security features are in place. This program successfully raised awareness and empowered santri with essential knowledge about digital communication safety. It highlights the importance of integrating communication psychology and practical digital literacy into community education to support secure online behavior for young entrepreneurs. Overall, this training shows that a contextual and applicable communication psychology approach is very effective in forming positive digital awareness and behavior in religious-based communities such as MSME students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Santri comes from Sanskrit the word "shastri" is actually not a Javanese vocabulary, but a word to show someone who understands books in Hindi. Another opinion says that "shastri" comes from the Javanese language "cantrik", a person who joins the teacher which means someone who is pursuing science by learning directly from the teacher who then tells the student to settle in a dormitory, house or cottage known as pawiyatan (Hakim & Sari, 2022).

Historians cross opinions in tracing the origins of Islamic boarding schools in the archipelago. First, the opinion that explains that pesantren is rooted in the Islamic tradition itself, namely the tradition of the tarekat. This opinion is based on the fact that the spread of

Islam in the archipelago began from the activities of the tarekat under the guidance of kiai or tarekat teachers. One of the important activities is to hold suluk, a practice of worship carried out in a mosque guided by a kiai. For this purpose, the kiai usually provides a special room as a place for students and is placed on the left and right sides of the mosque. In addition to being taught practice or routine reading, the followers of the tarekat are also taught various branches of religious science by being guided by classical books. This activity was later known as recitation. This recitation association then grew and developed into a pesantren. Until now, the term recitation has become a standard term that is used both by salaf and khalaf Islamic boarding schools (Afifah & Asyadulloh, 2021).

WhatsApp has become the main communication platform used by various levels of society, including in educational environments such as Islamic boarding schools (ponpes). WhatsApp's ease of use, efficiency, and accessibility make it an important tool in supporting the teaching and learning process, especially in today's digital age. However, as the use of communication technology increases, the potential risks to digital security are getting higher. Many users still do not understand the importance of maintaining security in communicating through this application. There is still a lack of awareness about threats such as phishing, online fraud, and privacy violations that can disrupt educational activities in the school environment. Therefore, counseling on the security of communicating through WhatsApp is very relevant to protect students and teaching staff from cyber risks (Sanmorino, Gustriansyah, & Puspasari, 2024).

The main obstacle faced by the students of the Al-Mukminun Nusukan Islamic boarding school is the lack of understanding of digital security, especially in the use of communication applications such as WhatsApp. There are students and teaching staff who are not aware of the potential dangers that can be caused, such as accidentally spreading personal data or becoming victims of online fraud. Based on this, this service activity aims to provide counseling on ways to communicate safely through WhatsApp, with a focus on increasing awareness and understanding of cyber threats and how to prevent them. It is hoped that through this activity, participants will be able to identify potential risks and implement security measures in their daily communication activities.

A literature review shows that counseling and training related to digital literacy are very effective in increasing individual awareness and skills in using technology safely. According to research conducted by Cortez et al., (2024); and Devi et al., (2020), a technology-based educational approach in the educational environment is able to improve the behavior of using digital applications. In addition, other empirical evidence suggests that improving digital

literacy can reduce the incidence of online fraud (Almethen & Alomair, 2024; Pärn et al., 2024). In Nusukan Village, the socio-economic conditions of the community support the use of technology as a learning tool, but the lack of access to digital security training is a challenge in itself. This region has great potential in terms of community involvement, especially in increasing the capacity of students and teaching staff to use technology safely and effectively in the educational process.

## 2. METHOD

This PkM activity will be held in March 2025. The place of implementation is the Al-Mukminun Nusukan Islamic boarding school in Surakarta. The number of participants who took part in this PkM activity was around 25 people. The students came from various regions in Central Java. The students of Islamic boarding schools are already familiar with technology for communication such as the WhatsApp application. However, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the importance of communicating securely through WhatsApp.

**Table 1.** Systematics of PkM Activities

No	PkM Activity Plan No
1	Members of the PkM team submitted proposals for the implementation of PkM activities.
2	Determine the time and place of PkM activities
3	The PkM activity began with an introduction implementation of PkM activities.
4	Core event: Counseling on the importance of communicating safely through WhatsApp
5	Discussion (interaction with PkM participants).
6	The evaluation is in the form of feedback from PkM participants
7	Closing.

In the implementation of Community Service (PkM) activities, systematic steps have been prepared to achieve the goals of the activity. The process begins with the submission of a proposal by a member of the PkM team, which outlines the plan and objectives of the activity. Once the proposal is received, the next step is to determine the appropriate time and place for the implementation of the activity. This is important so that the activity can run effectively and can be followed by participants properly. The activity then began with a brief introduction explaining the purpose and objectives of the implementation of PkM, especially about the importance of communicating securely through WhatsApp. At the core of the event, material on communication security through WhatsApp was delivered to participants, emphasizing the steps that need to be taken to maintain privacy and security in communication. After the

presentation of the material, a discussion session was opened to provide an opportunity for participants to interact and ask questions related to the material. The next step is evaluation or feedback from participants, which aims to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of the material as well as the benefits felt by participants (Liu, 2024; Pintea et al., 2024). Finally, the activity was closed with a conclusion and thanks to all those involved in PkM. The plan of equipment needed for this PkM activity can be seen in the following Table 2:

**Table 2.** Plan of Tools and Materials for PkM Activities

Tools/Materials	Used
Explain the material	Explaining the material presented
Modul (Paper)	Materials that can be read and followed by PkM participants.
Stationery	To record the material & fill out the feedback form for PkM activities.
<i>Smartphone</i>	Tools for the demonstration of the material presented.

### 3. RESULT

MSME students approved the PkM proposal that was submitted. The MSME students at the Al-Mukminun Nusukan Islamic boarding school were happy about this PkM activity. The PkM activities will take place as planned, in January 2025, in one of the classrooms at the Al-Mukminun Nusukan Islamic boarding school. The participants in the PkM were very engaged while listening to the presentation about the importance of communicating safely through WhatsApp. This is shown in Figure 1 below. The leaflet includes an explanation of the material given by a member of the PkM team. The leaflet summarizes the key points about the importance of secure communication through WhatsApp, such as how to set up privacy settings, how to recognize phishing attempts, and how to avoid online fraud.

- Do not click on links or download suspicious files sent by unknown numbers/not in contacts.
- Don't share personal information on *WhatsApp*. Participants can control who can see profile information (photo, status, info) through Settings > Account > Privacy.
- Always *update WhatsApp* to the latest version to ensure you get the latest protection from security threats.
- Avoid using unofficial versions of *WhatsApp*, as they can contain malicious programs (viruses) or cause privacy violations.
- If you receive a suspicious or spam message, you can report it directly to *WhatsApp*.

The feedback form contains optional questions (Yes/No) regarding the participants' understanding of the presentation about the importance of communicating safely via WhatsApp that has been submitted by members of the PkM team. As an evaluation material, we convey the percentage of feedback obtained from PkM activities

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The results of the feedback from this PkM activity showed an increase in the participants' understanding of communicating safely through WhatsApp. The level of understanding of participants regarding aspects of digital security before the implementation of Community Service (PkM) activities. The data displayed illustrates that their understanding is still very limited to a few important areas related to online security. In detail, about 20 percent of participants realized the importance of not clicking on just any link they received, reflecting a low level of vigilance against potential phishing or malware threats. Furthermore, about 50 percent of participants showed an understanding of the importance of not giving personal information to just anyone, but there is still a risk of misuse of personal data because half of the participants are not fully aware of the vulnerability. Finally, about 30 percent of participants already understand the importance of updating the WhatsApp version to the latest version to protect themselves from potential security loopholes that can be exploited by irresponsible parties, although there are still most participants who have not prioritized updating their application regularly.

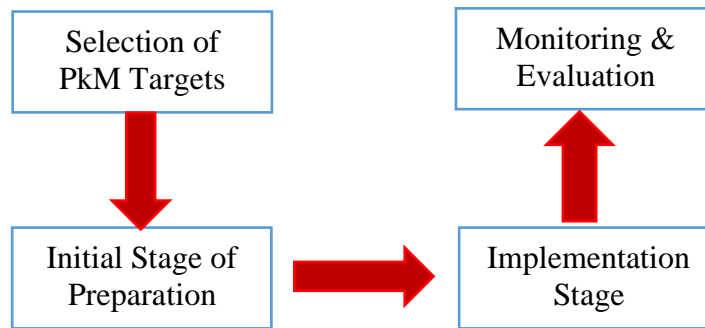
As many as 80 percent of participants stated that they would always update the latest version of WhatsApp to make communication safer. Keeping apps up-to-date is one of the effective measures to minimize vulnerability to security attacks. With the majority of participants understanding the importance of updating the app, this shows that they understand the importance of security features that are regularly updated by the app developer. Overall, the results of this feedback show that PkM activities are effective in providing practical knowledge and awareness to participants on how to communicate more securely through WhatsApp, with 80 percent of participants responding positively to three important aspects of digital security. This also shows that PkM activities like this are needed (continuously) in providing an understanding of the importance of communicating securely through WhatsApp.

Schedule

Activity Achievements		Shape Activities	Indicator	Target Access		
Communication Management Material Presentation		Communication Management Material Training	Partners understand Communication Management materials	Improving understanding of communication management of service partners		
N O	Activity Description			Moon		
				1	2	3
1	Preparation of Training Materials					
2	Material Presentation					
3	Skill Sesion					
4	Monitoring and Evaluation					
5	Online reporting and publicatin					

### Outputs and Achievement Targets

#### Diagram Flow PKM



This Community Service activity has been carried out according to the stage planned from the beginning. This activity was carried out with the community, and the team.



**Figure 1.** Communication Psychology Counseling

## 5. CONCLUSION

The safe counseling activity called PkM, which was held at the Islamic boarding school in Talang Jambe Village, Palembang, and was attended by students, went well and was successful. This was because the goals set at the start were met. From the feedback given by the participants, it's clear that they now understand the importance of using WhatsApp safely. Eighty percent of the participants said they would not click on any links in WhatsApp messages. Eighty percent also said they would not share personal information with strangers. Another 80 percent said they would always make sure to use the latest version of WhatsApp to keep their communication safe. Overall, the results from the participants' feedback were positive, and the same activity can be done again in the future.

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