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Improving the soft skills competence of political party cadre through training: a phenomenological approach

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills are an important factor considered by many organizations including political parties because they can lead each individual to change behavior for the better. This research is intended to answer the question of how soft skills are applied in their duties and roles as political party cadres, also what problems are encountered by people's representatives who lack competence in soft skills, and what kind of training should be done to overcome the lack of soft skills competence for political party cadres. This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The term phenomenology is etymologically derived from the Greek. Data collection was carried out by unstructured interviews with 20 informants consisting of 12 political party cadres, 6 community representatives, and 2 academics. The results of this study prove that training related to soft skills for political party cadres is very necessary considering their roles and duties will later become leaders either as representatives of the people, or as leaders in their own regions or at the center. in terms of training materials that still prioritize hard skills over soft skills, in terms of trainers or teaching staff and the methods applied to be more interactive and not one-way.



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Introduction

A balanced combination of hard skills and soft skills is a requirement given by various companies and organizations at this time. An employee who has strong hard skills but does not have soft skills is considered slower in achieving success. Thus it can be said that hard soft skills are a very decisive factor for the success of each individual. Human resource management experts and psychology agree that soft skills are a very important aspect to be considered by every company or organization, especially in developing one's career in the future (Ilias et al., 2012; Majid et al., 2012; Robles, 2012). Other experts say that soft skills are closely related to a person's sensitivity to the environment around him which will lead to behavior that is more respectful of his environment, the ability to cooperate and the ability to help others Kaipa, P & Millus, T (2005) in Caruana & McPherson (2013).

From previous research, it is known that soft skills determine 75% of the success of a job while hard skills are only 25% (Abbas, Abdul Kadir, & Ghani Azmie, 2013). Meanwhile, other researchers, namely Ramlall & Ramlall (2014) showed a higher percentage of soft skills, reaching 85% and only 15% of hard skills needed in work and also in business (Anthony, 2014). According to the definition of work competence as stated in the

Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) for the Office Administration Services Sector (2007), it is the work ability possessed by each individual which includes aspects of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes in accordance with established standards. In this case, the competition is divided into two parts, namely hard skills and soft skills. Both are considered important for fresh graduates to enter the world of work. The emphasis of hard skills is on aspects of special skills based on certain knowledge, while soft skills tend to lead individuals to behave both personally and interpersonally.

Taylor (2016) suggests that many organizations/companies claim that many of their employees do not have the soft skills as expected. The same thing happened on the Indonesian political stage. Regarding the world of politics, until now, people still complain that many members of the House of Representatives lack competence in soft skills. It became an unfavorable public spectacle when there was a fight between 2 members of parliament in the meeting room. Things like this happened again when there was a Hearing Meeting (RDP) for the South Labuhanbatu Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). It turned out that in this fairly large event, two of its members got into a fight. Those in contention are Deputy Chair of the Labusel DPRD from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) Zainal Harahap and Arwi Winata, a member of the Labusel DPRD from the Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI) faction. The dispute was caught on video and went viral in the social media.

The bad behavior of the council members has become a spectacle and people's complaints. In fact, they are people who have been chosen by the people to be able to carry out their duties in the interests of the people. However, it is very unfortunate because they are being targeted by the media with negative news and not because of their achievements. Some of the bad behavior of members of the House of Representatives include: (a) playing games during the meeting, (b) watching movies, porn during the meeting, (c) sleeping during the meeting, (d) not being present at the meeting, and (e) smoking in the meeting room. Based on the problems above, this research is aimed at answering the questions: 1) How are soft skills applied in their duties and roles as political party cadres, 2) What are the problems encountered by people's representatives who lack competence in soft skills, 3) What kind of training what should be done to overcome the lack of soft skills competence for political party cadres. The results of this study will make a major contribution to the field of political knowledge in Indonesia and also provide input for political parties so that they can provide appropriate training as needed by their cadres.

So far, people are more familiar with the term emotional intelligence. This is the forerunner and concept of soft skills development. Important aspects included in it relate to a person's character, attitude and behavior, including communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism (Vasanthakumari, 2019). Mahasneh & Thabet (2015) define soft skills as skills and abilities, which relate to personality, attitudes and behavior rather than formal or technical knowledge. Soft skills are a person's ability to carry out personal and professional relationships related to work and career prospects (Vyas & Chauhan, 2013) which is then referred to by sociologists as Emotional Intelligence Quotient (Rahayu & Anna, 2013). Soft skills are classified into 2 types, namely intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills are related to self-regulation such as managing stress, managing time, critical thinking, creative thinking, self-confidence, self-awareness and pro-active. While interpersonal skills are related to a person's ability to communicate with others such as the ability to lead people, motivate people, appreciate differences and diversity, empathy and the ability to resolve conflicts wisely (Widiastuty, 2014: 153). Therefore, it can be said that soft skills are one's self-strength to change and overcome various problems in the workplace (Hamidah & Palupi, 2012). To be able to develop an organization or company, strong human resources are needed, and therefore companies need to guide their employees to have high soft skills competence. This can be done through regular training (Rasid et al., 2018).

Data from Mitsubishi Research Institute, success in work can be seen from the following percentages: financial 10%, field expertise 20%, networking 30%, and soft skills 40%. Meanwhile, according to Dr. Goleman, only 20% of a person's success is determined by his intellectual intelligence (IQ), and the other 80% is a factor determined by EQ including soft skills. Soft skills are not a lesson that results or value can be seen immediately, but soft skills are invisible skills that are obtained through the accumulation of various experiences and require process and time (Mustikawati et al., 2016). Soft skills are skills related to attitudes that affect behavior (Mahasneh & Thabet, 2015) and the ability to lead and manage others (Choudary & Ponnuru in Setiani & Rasto, 2016; Emiliasari et al., 2017).

In research Jafar & Wahyuni (2016) mentions that there are 5 indicators of soft skills, namely as follows: communication skills, emotional intelligence, problem solving skills, ethics and thinking skills. Soft skills are related to emotional skills (Lavy & Yadin, 2013), how to communicate, how well to do business presentations, work in teams, and manage time well (Karthi & Mahalakshmi, 2014). Soft skills classified into 3 aspects. First, self-awareness skills or personal skills, which include appreciation of oneself as a creature of God

Almighty, community members and citizens; (2) realize and be grateful for the strengths and weaknesses they have and improve themselves as individuals who are beneficial to themselves and their environment. Second, thinking skills, which include: (1) information searching skills; (2) information processing and decision making skills; and (3) creative problem solving skills). Third, social skills, such as: (a) communication skills; (b) collaboration skills; (c) leadership skills; and (d) influential skills (the ability to influence people) (Gibb, 2014).

What is meant by training is an effort where the organization carries out an activity with the aim of changing employee behavior to achieve organizational goals. Training is also mentioned as a teaching and learning process that applies a special method that is conceptualized with the aim of increasing one's competence. The training was conducted to develop 3 aspects of human resources, namely knowledge, ability, skills and attitude (Larasati, 2018). The training is aimed at improving performance, increasing employee skills, c. Avoid managerial obsolescence. d. Solve problems. e. New employee orientation. f. Preparation for promotion and managerial success g. Improve satisfaction for the development needs of its employees' personnel. Meanwhile Moekijat (1992) states that training is intended not only to develop skills but also to develop the knowledge and attitudes of employees.

In the implementation of training, companies or organizations must pay attention to the components that affect the quality and quality of a training. The components in the training as stated by Sudjana (1996) in Ananda (2018) are: (a). Input instruments or facilities that support learning activities, such as curriculum, training objectives, learning resources, learning facilities, costs required and training managers, (b). Raw input, namely training participants who have diverse characters and backgrounds, (c) Environment input, which is related to the training environment or location, (d) Process, namely educational interaction activities between learning resources and training participants, (e). Outputs, namely graduates from training, (f) Other inputs, namely training support capacity such as job opportunities, information, socio-cultural situations, (g). Impact, namely the learning outcomes achieved by the trainees.

According to Rivai et al. (2019), training will be successful if the process of filling the right training needs. Basically the need is to meet the lack of knowledge, improve skills, or attitudes to varying degrees. Training needs can be classified into: (a). The need to meet current demands. This need can usually be recognized from the performance of employees who are not in accordance with the standards of work required for the position. (b). Meet the demands of other positions. At any hierarchical level in the company, job rotation is often carried out. The reasons vary, some say to overcome boredom, some say to form generalists. (c). To meet changing demands. Changes both internally (changes in systems, organizational structure) and external (changes in technology, changes in the company's business orientation) often require additional new knowledge. Although at this time there is no problem between the ability of the person and the demands of his position, in order to deal with the above changes, it can be anticipated with potential training.

According to Kaswan (2011) training methods can be grouped into three broad categories, namely: 1. Information presentation techniques, including: (a) Lectures/lectures (b) Conferences/discussions, (c) Correspondence courses, (d) Video/compact discs (CD), (e) Distance learning, (f) Interactive multi-media, (g) Internet and intranet, (h) Intelligent tutoring, (i) Organizational development; systematic and long-term organizational improvement program. Simulation methods include: (a) Case studies, (b) Role playing, (c) Behavior modeling, (d) Interactive simulation for virtual/virtual teams, (e) In-basketball technique, (f) Business simulation 3. On-the job training methods include: (a). Orientation training. (b) Internship, (c) On-the job training, (d) Near-the job training (using equipment that is similar to but far from the job itself), (e) Job rotation, (f) Committee assignments (or junior executive board), (g) Understudy assignments, (h) On-the job coaching (Cheng & Yuen, 2017).

Method

This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The term phenomenology is etymologically derived from the Greek. The term phenomenology was introduced by Johann Heinrich Lambert, in 1764 According to Husserl, phenomenology is an interest in something that can be understood directly with their senses, where all knowledge is obtained through sensor devices "phenomena" (Wolf & Wallace, 1986 in Sarantakos, 2017). Determination of informants in phenomenological research depends on the capability of the person being interviewed to be able to articulate their life experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The main data collection technique in phenomenological studies is in-depth interviews with informants to uncover the currents of consciousness. In the interview process, the questions asked were unstructured, and in a fluid atmosphere. In this study, interviews were conducted with 12 political party cadres from 6 big parties (Golkar, PDIP, Demokrat, Nasdem, Gerindra ad Perindo), 6 members of society consist of 2 college students, 2 professionals, and 2 lecturers using unstructured interview because this type of interview, according to

Sugiyono (2010), is an effort to find problems more openly where the parties involved are invited to ask for opinions and express their opinions, ideas in depth. Due to ethical issues and objections from the informants to be identified, all informants in this paper are only written with their initials.

Creswell & Poth (2016), explains the data analysis techniques in phenomenological studies as follows: (a). The researcher fully describes the phenomena/experiences experienced by the research subjects. (b). The researcher then finds statements (interviews) about how people explain in detail the statements and treat each statement as having equal value, then the details are developed without repeating. (c). The statements are then grouped into meaningful units, the researcher details these units and writes a text explanation about the experience accompanied by careful examples. (d) Researchers then reflect on their thoughts by using imaginative variations or structural descriptions, looking for all possible meanings and through divergent perspectives, considering the frame of reference for the phenomenon, and constructing how the symptoms are experienced. (e). The researcher then constructs the entire explanation of the meaning and essence of his experience. (f). Researchers report the results of their research. The report shows that there is a unity of meaning based on the experiences of all informants. After that, the researcher wrote the combined description.

Results and Discussions

The result of the interviews conducted to 6 members of society is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Results of interviews with 6 members of society

Aspects to be considered	Participants' Responses
A. Intrapersonal Communication	
(a) Pro Active	Many leaders are not pro-active towards a problem. Just waiting for the public's reaction.
(b) Behavior	Many leaders misbehave, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play games at meetings related to people's affairs, - Many are absent when there is an important meeting, - Demanding renovation of office space and asking for luxury facilities to be prepared when people are having difficulties due to the pandemic, - Many leaders are still pro to corruption.
(c) Emotional Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders are not good at managing their emotions in public. - Reprimand / scold the staff in front of the crowd.
(d) Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders are less skilled in solving problems
(e) Critical and Creative Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders are less creative in making breakthroughs to develop their regions
B. Interpersonal Communication	
(a) Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders are not skilled at communicating, especially inter-cultural communication, even some people have been reported by the community to the police because their communication problems are considered insulting or hurting the people's hearts, so that they have to be in prison.
(b) Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders have not been able to lead others - Don't have leadership spirit yet - Do not understand how to be an ideal leader
(c) Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders do not have a sense of empathy for their people, so they often hurt the hearts of others and their people.
(d) Friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many leaders are not friendly and even seem arrogant

From the results of the analysis above, it is found that from 6 political parties, 2 political parties provide fairly intensive training, namely between 7 to 8 times per year, 2 political parties provide training 5-6 times per year and the other 2 only provide 3-4 times. per year. The training provided is also prioritized on hard skills rather than soft skills, as said by one of the cadres. "Our organization always conducts training, especially for

new cadres. Initial training is very important so that the cadres understand their roles and duties as politicians. Training is usually organized by the head office, but in practice it is carried out by branch offices. Unfortunately, this training seems to be more concerned with elements of hard skills related to politics, compared to soft skills. In fact, in my opinion, soft skills are more important because they can shape the personality and character of a responsible leader, not a leader who is only good with strategies. (RY- Golkar Party Cadre).

Table 2. Results of Interviews with 12 political cadres

Themes	Participants' Responses
1. Soft Skills	
(a) Sources of getting the knowledge of soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seraching from books and internet (4 participants) - From seminars (6 participants) - From training (only 2 of 10 participants)
2. Training	
(a) Frequency of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PDIP : 7-8 times/year - Golkar : 5-6 times/year - Demokrat : 3-4 times/year - Nasdem : 5-6 times/year - Gerindra : 3-4 times/year - Perindo : 7-8 times/year
(b) Training Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Internal (organized by the Head Office) (b) Internal (organized by the Branch Office) (c) External (trainers are from professional training center)
3. Topics of Training delivered	
Hard Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Pancasila (The Five Pricinples) (b) Political Education (c) Political Communication (d) Legislation Capacity (e) Political Ethics (f) Leadership
Soft Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Communication skills (b) Public Speaking
4. Methods of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Lecture (b) Presentatio (c) Group Discussion
5. Trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Internal (from the Head Office) (b) Internal (from the Branch Office) (c) External (from professional Training Center)

This is in line with the statements of Arep and Tanjung (2003) and Moekijat (1992) in Simarmata et al. (2021) that training is primarily aimed at developing human resource capabilities in knowledge, abilities, skills and also to improve attitudes and behavior. Therefore, the training should be held not only to improve the hard skills but also the soft skills of prospective leaders. An important element in training is the ability of the trainer and the method used. "In one year maybe only about 3-4 times this organization holds training. This training is intended for cadres who have just joined. Unfortunately, the trainers are also from party members, so they don't have good teaching skills. It is better to improve the quality of training in the future, the organization cooperates with professional training institutions. In addition, the teaching method is only lectures, not interactive, so it is boring. In addition, the material provided is also more about politics, even though what is needed by prospective leaders is how to build their character so that they become leaders who can maintain the trust of their people." (TU – Democratic Party Cadre)".

This is in line with what was conveyed by Kaswan (2011) that training must be carried out with the right method. The training method is not only in the form of lectures, but there must be interactive discussions, role playing, case studies, behavior modeling and even interactive simulations in virtual/virtual form. Meanwhile, the results of interviews with 6 community representatives show that the competence of political party cadres is still very low. The community actually sees it from inadequate soft skills competence, so that there are still many problems in society that stem from the inability of leaders to solve problems or from the character of

leaders who are less responsible. "Cadres of political parties in Indonesia must be retrained to be more competent to become people's representatives in parliament or leaders in a region. Until now, we still find quite a lot of corruption cases in various regions in Indonesia. This shows that the quality of the leader who is a party cadre is less competent in soft skills. In addition, there are still many leaders who do not have good communication skills so they cannot become role models for the wider community. I think every political party must be responsible for educating its cadres. The training carried out by each organization must be re-evaluated so that it does not only focus on hard skills competencies but also soft skills, because soft skills will direct individuals to competencies related to behavior." (GU – Lecturer).

This is in line with the statement of Snell et al in Mahasneh & Thabet (2015) soft skills are defined as skills related to personality traits & attitudes that influence behavior. Soft skills are invisible, namely abilities that cannot be seen with the naked eye, but can be seen by how individuals are able to adapt to the environment and how one's ability to lead (Emiliasari et al., 2017).

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that soft skills training for political party cadres is very necessary considering their roles and duties will later become leaders both in their own region and at the center. The components in the training that must be reviewed are in terms of training materials that still prioritize hard skills over soft skills, in terms of trainers or teaching staff and the methods applied to make them more interactive and not one-way. For further research, the researcher suggests that research related to the soft skills competition of political party cadres be conducted with a different approach.

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